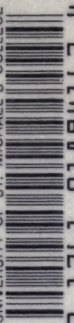


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ARNOUL THE ENGLISHMAN

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

“ARE the sheep all folded, Brother?”

THE voice was a strong and masterful one, a little rasping, perhaps, in its decided accent of Norman-French; the speaker a powerful, well-proportioned man in the prime of life. His brown habit, of a coarse, woollen material, hung straight from shoulder to ankle, with a narrow strip of the same cloth before and behind, and was held in at his waist by a leathern girdle.

The keen moorland air had given a patch of colour to either cheek; otherwise his face, like his voice, proclaimed him what he was—a Frenchman. His eyes were dark and restless, his nose aquiline, his bearded lip and chin of such a stamp that it needed his dress, as well as a certain habitual placidity and repose in his bearing, to proclaim him a lay brother of the famous Cistercian house of St Mary of Buckfast.

In sharp contrast to him was the brother whom he addressed. A little wizened old fellow, whose wrinkled and puckered face, tanned like a skin by long exposure to wind and sun, spoke of the wild moors, of yellow gorse and purple heather. His twinkling eyes looked over the stone walls of the fold and rested with a certain

pride and affection upon his flock. It was his boast that he had never lost a single lamb, that he knew every inch of the vast moorland pastures belonging to the Abbey, that he could lead his sheep through fog and mist, straight as the birds' flight, from point to point of the desolate expanse, until they were safely enclosed in the great fold of Brent Moor. And there was something in his boast, too. The brothers told strange tales of Brother Peter, this quaint little lay brother whose patched and repatched habit hung always awry, and whose shrewd eyes twinkled under a rugged thatch of eyebrows and hair that had once been red, but were now bleached to a nondescript sandy grey.

"He had a familiar. . . ." "Not so pious as he might be . . . and had dealings with the little folk of the moor." So some of them whispered. But Brother Gregory was nearly right when he said, in his sing-song drawl, that Brother Peter knew his sheep as well as if they were Christians. He told them where to go, to be sure, and there they went, obedient to their shepherd, just as Brother Gregory's bees obeyed him, staying in their hives when he whispered to them that a monk of the Abbey was dead.

Brother Gregory was a man of the soil, too, like Brother Peter. He tended his bees behind the Abbey Church, in the fair green meadows that slope down gently to the Dart; and he, if anyone, ought to know; for like Brother Peter, he was very close in touch with Nature and understood a great many things that the wise choir monks could not learn, try as they might, from the great tomes in the Scriptorium. But Brother Peter lived closer to Nature even than Brother Gregory. Up in the great heart of the moor, where Nature herself breathes and palpitates, he had lived from his boyhood—

save when he went down to the great Abbey to learn his *Paters* and his *Aves* and to make his noviciate as a lay brother of the Cistercian Order. He knew where the speckled trout lay in the shallows of the little rivers that purl and dash and bubble over the bosom of Dartmoor, and when the silver salmon were coming back again from their journey to the sea, to flash and leap from pool to pool until they reached once more the sandy gravel-beds where they first wriggled out of the egg. He knew—none better—the favourite haunts of the red deer, and where the bees went to find the sweetest honey. Every beast and plant and stone of the moor he knew and loved. He was a moor-man born and bred. But he loved none so well as his own sheep. They were, for him, part and parcel of the whole—just as he was himself. So, perhaps, Brother Gregory was not so far wrong when he said that Peter's sheep understood him.

"Yes, Brother," the shepherd answered simply.

"And none of them missing?" queried his interlocutor.

"None, Brother," replied the little man dreamily, as if in answer to a catechism; and indeed he had the same questions to answer whenever he brought the sheep home to Brent.

"Then, Brother, be in and eat and get what rest you can. To-morrow is the feast day of our Lord the Abbot, and all the brethren are bidden to the Abbey. Gyst, the cottar, will stay here with the serfs. But we must be up betimes, for it is a long cry from Brent to the monastery in time for Mass. All the countryside will be there to-morrow, to do honour to the Lord Abbot, and they say the Bishop himself will come from Exeter to be present. Haste thee, Brother. Thy sheep have no further need of thee—now."

"Yes, Brother," said the little man meekly, as he turned to enter the low stone building that served as a cell for the monastic grangers and shepherds of Buckfast, sojourning on Brent Moor.

Brother Basil, for it was he who had charge of the settlement on the moor, waited for a few moments, looking out over the sloping hills that billowed away from the height on which he stood. The setting sun cast long black shadows across the slopes. Here a vivid patch of yellow caught its rays and flamed into a golden prominence, and there the shaded purples of the heather faded in sombre contrast. In the far distance a rugged tor stood out, black and defiant, against the mantling glory of the spring sky, erect and solemn like a sentinel guarding the outposts of the world. A silver stream, gilded by the yellow rays, wound in and out among the hills, here and there lost in the shaded greens of the breaking foliage where the trees that leant over its surface grew the thicker, but always reappearing in a shimmer of ripple and fall as it descended to the ocean.

Brother Basil drew a long sigh. Not that he was at all sentimental, for he was as devoid of sentiment as the great tor standing out before him in the paling light. But he had been taught that Nature reflected her Maker ; and he always sighed when he composed himself to his prayers. Where Brother Peter's eyes would have sparkled all the more, and the curves and puckers deepened upon his weather-beaten face in a contented smile, Brother Basil looked grave and sighed. But then Peter was in touch with Nature, and he mixed up his religion with his herding. He had the faculty of seeing the beauty of the world and of seeing beyond it as well ; whereas Brother Basil had to make a conscious effort of faith when his mind travelled from what he

saw to what he was taught lay behind it. Hence the sigh.

The hum of the bees was growing less and less audible. The sheep, settling down for the night, ceased wandering aimlessly around the fold. The sunlight paled, and a rosy glow heralded the cold, clear twilight of the moor. A little bell rang out from the gable of the cell, and Brother Basil, crossing himself as he did so, turned to enter it. For a short time a murmur was heard, monotonous and soothing. The brothers and their serfs were at their night prayers. Then silence and the night descended together, and the tor kept solitary watch in the moonlight as the world whirled on towards another day.

CHAPTER II

THE EDUCATION OF A BOY

IN the fairest valley of the fair land of Devon lay the Abbatial house of Buckfast. The Dart, born of the rills and rains far up on the head of the moor to which it gives its name, here brought its turbulent career to a close, and flowed gently and peacefully through the green meadows that gave evidence of monastic toil and care. Save when the melting snows or a summer freshet goaded it to fury, and it rose black and angry to gnaw at the roots of the great trees that lined its western bank, its placid flow laved shelving earth carpeted with violets and primroses and daffodils, and shaded by coppices of noble oaks and beeches.

It had seen the beginning of the famous monastic house. Long before the monks came to Devon its bosom had mirrored other human forms than those that now walked up and down beside it clothed in cowl and scapulary. The rude cave-dwellers from the south, the strange inhabitants of the stone circles hidden away high up in the fastnesses of the moor, had hunted and fished along its banks from source to estuary. Their wild eyes had peered into its glassy pools. They had waded across its shallow fords, tracking the deer and the otter, and thrust their barbed spears into its waters—where the salmon lay, rank on rank, their tails all pointing to the sea—long, long before. They had hunted and slain each other, and then they had been slain themselves or gone away; for a new race, with

dark, matted locks and wild, hunted eyes, came, flying, from the east. They wore the skins of wild beasts, and were streaked and pied with paint, and they fled ever westward, through the bracken and the heather, towards the land of the setting sun. Then came others in their wake, speaking a strange language—a dogged, warlike race, sturdy and strong, armed with stout javelins and shields, and wearing helmets on their heads. And they, too, fished and hunted and trapped and snared—but seldom, for they were few and had the town of Exeter to hold; and they warred with those that had gone before whenever they rose against their conquerors, and held the country for themselves and for the honour of their great, far-off city. Then they withdrew, peaceably enough, and fair-haired men came to fish and hunt along Dart. Last of all came the monks, a quiet and a peaceful race. They did not carry bows or javelins, but they sang songs as they cut down the branches of trees and wove little dwellings for themselves on the flat land that bordered Dart. Nor did they make war. Always singing, they hewed out the grey rock from the hillside and built, or tilled the fertile soil and sowed and reaped, until a tiny stone church was built and a house for the black monks of St Benedict. And so they worked and built and died for over three hundred years—never making war, never slaying, but always singing—till they, too, passed away, and the grey monks of Savigny came to take their place. And the grey monks did the same things as the black monks. They toiled and quarried and built and sang, for they were peaceful-minded too, and had no thought of war. And the people round about ceased from slaying and from all desire of war. Last of all, a hundred years before our story opens, the grey monks of Savigny disappeared, and the sons of

St Bernard came from Citeaux, in white robes and black scapulars, to build and plough and sing just as their predecessors had done. Old Dart had seen it all and remembered it all. As Abbot had succeeded Abbot it saw the stately pile of masonry rising, the house and its dependences growing, towers and buttresses and walls springing from the greensward up to the blue sky, the great arched gateway built and the heavy, iron-studded gates hung, and bells brought and blessed and set in place in the tower. And then, at night-time—when the river slept under the cold moon, and in the early morning, and throughout the day, it heard the silver tones pealing out across woodland and moorland and the rise and fall of the monks' voices in the Abbey Church, and the lowing of the kine in the higher meadows, and the ring of steel upon stone, and the click and whirr of looms. What it could neither see nor hear the bees told it, or the swallows, as they came skimming over its bosom from the monastery eaves. The bees sang, and the swallows whispered of the flocks and herds on the far-off moors, of Holne and Buckfast and Brent, and of the great wealth of the Abbey and the number of its retainers, of stately ceremonial and gorgeous pageant, when the incense-clouds rose and drifted out through the open windows of the church to mingle with the incense of the flowers without, and when the tapers twinkled like stars on the altar of St Mary. All these things Dart knew, and more; for it was very old and wise. But it knew and loved best the peace and quiet that reigned in the valley since the monks had come; and it murmured a vow to the flowers and the grasses as it passed to do its best to be peaceful and quiet too.

Only when the waters came together on the moor, Dart rose hissing and angry, and tore down the valley,

a solid wall of sullen, moor-stained water, carrying away branches and whole trees upon its bosom, and sometimes, when it claimed its human heart, a dead man ; tearing pebbles and boulders from the bank, chafing, gnawing, grinding at its stony bed, wearing away the rock in polished grooves and strange, deep cauldrons, as it rushed, mad with rage and cruel in its forgetfulness, away from the sodden moor. Still Dart did not often forget its promise ; and when it did, it was not so much its own fault as the moor's.

This morning the sun rose over a peaceful river. The highest branches of the trees just stirred in the gentle breeze. Not a ripple ruffled the calm water. The monastery bells were calling the brethren to the first hour of prayer. The cows were gathered at the gate of the byre, their udders swelling with rich Devon milk, waiting for the cowherd. By the riverside stood a boy, his whole being for the moment intent upon the fish in the pool beneath him.

Arnoul de Valletort was a near relation of the Abbot of St Mary's, and since the death of his father, eight years before (his mother had died shortly after his birth), had lived and studied at the Abbey. Save when he stayed with his only brother, the secular priest of Woodleigh by the Avon, or went, as he had only once or twice done, to the episcopal city of Exeter, he knew no other world than Buckfast, and he desired no other. When his father died, the Abbot had placed him among the alumni of the order. It was no less the wish of his brother than that of his monastic kinsman ; for what was Sir Guy to do with a young boy to look after when he had his parish to claim all his time ? He had lived the life of study and routine that the others lived—rising

with the sun, working his allotted hours in the fields, learning his task of grammar or plain-song, and lying down on his hard pallet, healthily tired and sleepy, as soon as he had kissed the Abbot's hand and got his blessing with the rest, when the last office of compline was over.

And so from a pale-faced, timid boy of ten he had grown into a hearty, strong, and well-knit lad, ready either to become a novice or to leave the precincts of the Abbey for the great world without.

Abbot Benet, his kinsman, had watched over him with an especial care. He had long been studying him for signs of a vocation to the monastic life; but, though the lad was undoubtedly of a happy and industrious disposition, and gave evidence of a very real affection for both the house and the brethren, he seemed to have no very great wish or inclination to become a monk.

And so, on his sixteenth birthday, the Abbot sent for him to the chapter-house and, in company with his brother Sir Guy, reasoned quietly with him about his future. It was then decided, by both the Abbot and the priest, that he should leave the alumnate forthwith and go to live with one of the secular dependents of the Abbey. He should go daily to Mass and to the school in the cloister, where he should finish his grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, and begin the studies of the quadrivium. In the meantime his future would be thought of. He might, perhaps, be sent to Oxford or to Paris, if he proved himself studious and worked well. There was sufficient patrimony, at least, coming to him from his father's estate to enable him to study and fit himself for some benefice or other, or for some good position in the world. But he could hope for little more than that. And so the Abbot gave him his blessing,

and his brother spoke kindly to him, as he always did, and encouraged him to do his best, and he took his few belongings from the aluminate and went out through the Abbey gates with a little sadness at heart, as being no more one of them, and yet with a strange and exulting sense of freedom and expectancy, as having at last stepped over, once for all, the threshold of the great world.

The two years that he had lived with Budd the granger had added maturity to his form and bearing. He had been faithful to his brother's wishes and to the Abbot's commands, regular and painstaking in his studies; and he had made considerable progress in them all. But it had not been all books and studies with him. He had found time to roam about the woods and along the streams, to ride far up past Holne by the bridle tracks that led across the skygirt moorland, to race, with his great deerhound—a gift to him from Sir Guy—from Buckfast to the still, black pool that lies, silent and mysterious, under the overhanging branches of its solemn trees, a mile above the Abbey, and throw himself, the dog following him, into its refreshing coolness. Budd had taught him how to snare the rabbits that had their warrens in the waste ground over the river, and showed him how to bait the otter-traps with fish. He had learnt the habits of many of the moorland creatures and knew how to lie full length on the bank of the stream, his arm plunged shoulder-deep in the cool water, his fingers moving gently under the belly of some great trout that lay, all unsuspecting of his danger, with his head pointed upstream.

As he stood, this bright spring morning, bending low over the silvery salmon-pool, he was a perfect picture of health and strength. Lithe and agile, with muscles

hardened by healthy exercise, face, throat and arms tanned to a deep brown, he looked much older than his eighteen years. His head was bare, and his dress, of some loosely fitting homespun, open at the throat, reached only to his knees. He bore a curious resemblance to his kinsman the Abbot—save that his brown hair was long and straight, carelessly thrown back from his broad forehead, whereas the Abbot's head was shaved in the monastic fashion, so that only a crown of short, curling hair was left above his ears. But the features were the same—large grey eyes that looked out frankly and fearlessly from under strongly marked brows, a regularly formed, but rather prominent, nose, and a squarely cut chin that spoke of resolution and courage. The expression of his face in repose was, perhaps, a trifle too serious. Only, when he spoke, he habitually smiled, and his parted lips showed two pearly rows of regular teeth.

“Well, there's no getting another,” he said to himself, as he saw the great bar of silver he was watching flash up to the head of the pool, “and Father Abbot must be contented with one. But it's the finest fish taken this year, and fit for the table of the Lord Pope himself.”

He lifted aside a little heap of last year's bracken as he spoke and discovered a noble salmon, fresh run and still palpitating with life, beneath it. “A fine fish, indeed,” he went on, as he lifted it and turned to go towards the Abbey, “and worthy of St Benet's feast. The Abbot will eat you, my beauty, and the nobles sitting at the high table will eat you, and the Bishop will lift up his two fat hands and declare he never saw so fine a fish, and he will eat you, too. That's worth living for, isn't it?—and worth going down to the sea

and up to the moor, and growing and fattening for—and being caught, too—to be eaten on the feast day of St Benet and to be praised by the Bishop?”

As he neared the cluster of buildings, outhouses, barns and workshops, that crowded about the gateway of the Abbey, he saw the first-comers straggle in; and, taking his fish straight to the kitchen, he gave it to the cook with express injunctions as to how it was to be dished and served at the repast. Then, retracing his steps, he sat down beside the porter's lodge and watched the stir and bustle of the gathering crowd. First came the cottars and grangers, peasants from the outlying districts and brethren from the moorland farms and folds, on foot for the most part, though some of them rode astride shaggy ponies; peasants coming singly or in groups of three or four, some of them with their wives and daughters, the kerchiefs of the women lending further colour to the assembly; peasants in black and grey and green, and monks in their habits of brown and white, Cistercians and black-robed Benedictines; and there were two Franciscans who had been preaching a pardon near by, with bare feet and knotted ropes about their waists. The approaches to the monastery and the space within the gates took on the appearance of a fair. A pedlar stood just outside the gate, chaffering and bargaining over his wares. Buxom maidens smiled and blushed at their bashful swains, who nudged each other and blushed and grinned back sheepishly in their turn. Cider was flowing already, and hydromel, that sweet, stinging drink that the old monks knew so well how to make. Brother Gregory tramped up, hot and dusty from his long walk, though he had set out from the cell on Brent well before the sun appeared over the eastern hills. Little Brother Peter was at his side,

dusty too, but as fresh and cool as ever. The lines about his pursed-up little mouth were cut deep as with a chisel, and his eyes danced and twinkled as they fell upon the motley crowd. Arnoul knew most of the new-comers well. He had lived among these simple folk since he was a child, and had a kindly word and jest for all.

Then the knights and nobles began to arrive to the tune of jangling bits and trampling hoofs. Pomeroy's and Cliffords, and Tracys—all had some brother or nephew professed at St Mary's and came to grace the feast and do honour to the Lord Abbot.

There rode Sir Robert de Helion, bland and smiling as ever, one of the greatest friends and benefactors of the house; and there, on his great black war horse, Sir Siger Vipont, Knight of Moreleigh, his brow contracted and his thin lips pressed closely together. Beside him rode his only child Sibilla. The Sheriff of Devon with his lady, Guy de Briteville and his son-in-law, Ralph de Chalons of Chalonsleigh, were there. Sir William Hamlyn of Deandon, who for twenty years had never missed riding in to the feast from his home up by Widdecombe on the great moor, and who, with his customary generosity to the Abbey, was even now providing the greater part of the cost of enlarging the church already crowded by the growing community, brought with him his near neighbour Michael de Spitchwick. Knights and nobles with their ladies, squires with their dames, Arnoul knew them all and named them all but Vipont, against whom he had a grudge; for the Knight, quick-tempered as he was handsome, had beaten him sorely, years before, for some boyish trespass in the woods of Moreleigh. Sibilla he had not seen since first he had come to the monastery; but now

she burst upon his sight like a vision and he thought he had never looked upon anything half so beautiful before. Forgetful of his dislike of Vipont, he turned and followed them with his gaze into the courtyard of the Abbey. It was involuntary, unconscious. He hardly knew what he did, or doubtless his former monastic training would have brought the quick blushes to his brow. But he saw the gracefully poised head, a mass of dark chestnut hair held in by a simple fillet, the smiling brown eyes and the happy, sunburnt face of a maiden not much younger than himself; and he stood and gazed through the vaulted gateway until a hand upon his shoulder and a rough voice in his ear brought his mind back from the land of visions.

"How now, lad! Have you no voice to speak to a comrade, that you stand there moonstruck? Here have I and Budd been calling to you these two minutes; and all you do is gape, gape, gape, through yonder gateway as though you had caught sight of a ghost in the broad daylight!"

"Roger! And so it is!" cried Arnoul. "And what do you here away from your boats and nets? And where is my brother? And . . . and . . . and . . . ?"

"Softly, lad," replied the man. "One question at a time an't please you! Your brother, Sir Guy, is well and had his Mass to read at Woodleigh ere he could set out for Buckfast. He will be here anon. He was on his way to church before I set out. I have travelled through the breaking of the morn—in good company, too, i' faith! a palmer picked up on the road, and two vinegar-faced ruffians in brown, with cords about their waists and books in their hands. I have just rid me of them. Never a village did we enter to quaff a cup of sweet Devon cider for the house's good, but they

straightway opened their jaws by the roadside and were droning away at their psalms. At every halt they warned me of the wrath to come ; and they so frightened the good palmer that he nearly caught the palsy from overmuch crossing of himself. And all, forsooth, because I drink the good juice that God gives to Devon men and speak, as I was taught, without *Benedicite* or *Ave*."

"Why did they journey with you, then, good Roger, if they thought so hardly of you?" asked Arnoul.

"Faith, they thought it wiser to walk with the devil, than to risk a cracked pate by themselves. 'Twixt here and Woodleigh there be many making merry ; and—— But soft ! Out of the way, there ! Here is my Lord Bishop and his train !"

Comparative silence fell upon the crowd. Even the pedlar stopped crying his wares as the Bishop rode forward on his white palfrey. Preceded by four men mounted on stout beasts, wearing livery and carrying arms, a sort of cross between body-servants and soldiers, he was the central figure in a little group made up, save one, of ecclesiastics. The white-robed Premonstratensian prior of Torre, with whom he had lodged the previous night, and his own chancellor, Lodosewell, rode upon his left. To the right was Walter de Bathe, Lord of Colnbrooke, with whom his lordship was engaged in deep and animated conversation. Behind them rode a canon and the Bishop's chaplain, with two or three lesser clerics carrying a cross and books. These were followed by three pack mules, on whose backs were strapped and bound huge cases and bundles. And lastly, finishing as it began, the cavalcade came to an end with four of my Lord of Exeter's liveried men-at-arms riding abreast.

My Lord Bishop himself was a plump, rosy-cheeked man, apparently about fifty years old. Clad in the purple robes of his high station and wearing on his breast a golden cross, he jogged along slowly on his white steed, interrupting his evidently pleasant talk now and then to stretch out his jewelled hand in copious blessings over the monks and peasants who devoutly fell on their knees as he passed. As he reached the gateway he caught sight of Arnoul and leant from his saddle, stretching out a podgy hand, over the glove of which glistened an enormous ring, to be kissed. It was a somewhat difficult feat for him to perform; for, as has been said, the Bishop was portly, and the beast he strode—the fattest of its kind—gave evidence clear and indisputable of the richness of its pasture and the excellence of the fare provided in the episcopal stables. His effort made the good cleric purple in the face; but he managed to capture the young man's hand in his own and bring himself into the perpendicular once more.

“And how is my brother Poacher, my brother Bird-snarer?” he questioned, his smile-wreathed visage beginning to assume its normal colour again. “My Lord Abbot has a brave handful in you, sirrah! By'r Lady, you are as like him as the one tower of my cathedral is like the other! And what is the last mischief you have been up to? By the Mass, Sir Walter, the last time I was here, the young rascal had the whole refectory in an uproar by reason of the wasps' nest he hung up at the kitchen window for grubs! For grubs, mark you! He had the impudence to hang it up for grubs! But that is a long story, and it will bear telling another time.”

The chaplain, the canon and the clerics, as was their

bounden duty, tittered in chorus. If they had heard it once, they had heard the tale from the Bishop's lips threescore times at least, since last he had honoured Buckfast with his presence. Arnoul hung his head, and the Bishop continued in good-humoured banter: "'Tis a good thing thy brother purposes sending thee to France when my Lord Abbot next goes to the chapter at Citeaux."

This was news to Arnoul, who was somewhat taken aback by its suddenness. "Ay, and hand thee over to the friars, who, God wot! are sticklers for their observance. None of thy lax Cistercians there, my lad! No more snaring and trapping when thou art in the schools of the University of Paris! No more running wild—but books and schools, and bread and water, and pulse! No more of thy poaching—yes, I had the tale from Vipont himself—'*Tu virga percuties eum et animam ejus de inferno liberabis*'—yes, poaching, I said poaching! And that reminds me, Sir Walter"—once the Bishop started it was as difficult to stop him as to dam the Dart in full flood—"that reminds me of my own deer park. The ruffians! They have pillaged and ravaged and ravened! They have chased my deer and snared my hares. But I have overreached them! '*Quem Deus vult perdere. . .*' I have thundered against them! '*Quodcumque ligaveris super terram. . .*' I have scourged them with a whip of scorpions! I have unsheathed the sword of excommunication against them! Henceforth, whosoever, prompted thereto by the evil one, shall dare to violate. . . ." But the Bishop, having dropped Arnoul's hand as he warmed to righteous indignation over the profanation of his preserves and the slaying of his deer, was now passing through the great stone gateway, and his excited voice was lost in the clanging of the bells

and the bustle of the crowd making ready to enter the church.

With the aid of his chaplain and one of the men-at-arms, his lordship dismounted at the door of the Abbey; and, leaving his baggage to follow him, he walked forward to salute the Lord Abbot, who came towards him from the monastery. The two prelates embraced and entered the cloister together. The crowd surged forward through the great western portal into the church, and Arnoul, having lost Budd and Roger in the press, managed to find a place before a pillar whence he could see the sanctuary, not far from the spot where Vipont stood with his daughter Sibilla at his side.

CHAPTER III

HELION'S DEED OF GIFT

THE gorgeous ceremonial of the pontifical Mass had come to an end and the voices of the monks in choir were rising and falling in the office of sext. Both the Bishop and the Abbot were removing the cloth-of-gold vestments that they had worn during the ceremony. Arnoul had noticed little of the detail. His kinsman had worn a new mitre. One of the altar candles was out of plumb and guttered, and some of the alumni had shuffled with their feet as, clothed in little white Cistercian habits with short black scapulars, they sang, standing around the huge gradual on its stand in the centre of the choir. Vipont's lips were still hard set. It was curious that he should have noticed that. The people had joined with the monks in singing the common portions of the Mass: and he himself had sung the '*in terra pax hominibus*' with the rest, though he hardly knew that he was singing. Strange that his thoughts should wander so. He was going to France—to Paris. Was he going to Paris? And why had not his brother or the Abbot told him so before? Someone might have told him. The sweet, sticky odour of the incense drifted down the nave and wrapped him round. The monotonous rhythm of the plain-chant fascinated him—'*et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum.*' So that was old Vipont's daughter? Of course he knew that there was a daughter. He had known her as a tiny child. But he had never imagined. . . . And

Vipont? Vipont had probably forgotten all about him—but how he hated him! . . . And he had once beaten him and his hound! The memory of the childish injury burned and rankled. So he dreamed on, and distractions multiplied—Paris and the hound and Vipont's daughter, and Paris and the new mitre and Vipont—until he found himself singing the Trisagion, '*pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua.*' He pulled himself together with an effort and bowed his head before the shrouded mystery. The Bishop came down from his throne and, laying his precious mitre aside, knelt like the meanest serf in all the church, through the pregnant silence.

And then the burden of triumph was taken up again—'*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, Osanna in excelsis!*'—and the stately ceremony hastened towards its end. Now it was done. The church was fast emptying, and the people making their way towards the long tables spread for the feast under the trees leading to the river. Vipont had disappeared, and Sibilla was with the ladies who had come in with their lords for the feast of St Benet. They could not enter the cloister and eat in the refectory with the other bidden guests. No woman could cross the threshold of the Abbey. But no doubt she would find a place with the other dames of birth and station in the guest-house. And so he would not see her again. At least it was not probable.

As he left the church he was pounced upon by Roger, who had been lying in wait for him at the door; and hurried off to greet his brother, the priest of Woodleigh, whom he feared less and loved far more than his more distant kinsman, the Abbot of St Mary's.

Meanwhile the lay brothers were hastening their pre-

parations for the feast in refectory and kitchen. Great trenchers heaped with wheaten bread, and jugs filled to the brim with white ale and cider and thin red wine, were placed at regular intervals upon spotlessly clean tables of wood. At the high table where the Abbot sat, though not before his own place, was spread a cloth for the Bishop and several persons of rank.

The refectory was a spacious, rectangular room, built in stone, and designed to seat, at the tables ranged lengthwise against three of its walls, a community of fifty monks. It was divided down the centre by three low stone pillars from whose capitals sprang the arches of a plainly vaulted ceiling. One side was pierced with a row of Norman windows. The other was a blank wall, save for a door leading directly to the cloister. At the foot of the room, where no tables stood, except a small one for the convenience of the servers, was an arched aperture through which the dishes were passed from the adjoining kitchen. The furniture was plain and simple in the extreme. A large wooden cross hung behind the Abbot's seat. A sort of desk or pulpit for the reader was raised in the centre of the southern wall, between the windows. Apart from these, there was usually nothing in the room but the tables, upon which lay, for each of the brethren, a dish for salt, a wooden ladle or spoon, and a two-handled cup. To-day, on account of the number of the guests, and even though most of the lay brothers would be occupied in serving both in the refectory and at the impromptu tables laid under the trees, long boards had been brought in and set upon trestles down the centre of the room. The whole looked delightfully white and cool and clean, and the steam of the good fare coming from the kitchen whetted the already keen appetites of the guests as,

headed by the Bishop and the Abbot, they came through the cloisters to the refectory.

After grace, chanted by the assembled community, the brothers brought great steaming platters of savoury viands to the tables. There were thick brown soups of lentils and dried peas, stewed eels brought that morning from the Dart by Totnes, and carp from the stew-ponds of the Abbey, seethed in wine; a pottage of garden herbs flavoured with salt and rosemary and thyme, and a mess of roots and succulent leaves, the composition of which was known only to Brother Paul, the chief cook himself. Lastly, there was salmon, borne in upon a great platter by a smiling, red-faced server and set before the Father Abbot himself.

Arnoul, whose place was far down the refectory below the lay brothers, looked to see the Bishop's plump hands go up in admiration and astonishment; but his lordship contented himself with raising his eyes from the fish to the vaulted roof and stretching out his hand for the generous portion served him by the Abbot.

The meal proceeded in silence, save only for the somewhat monotonous voice of the reader recounting the life of an early martyr for the faith; for the Cistercians practised the rule of St Benedict, in which the custody of the tongue, as well as abstinence from flesh meat, is especially enforced. At last the reading ended. The honey and the fruits, and a sweet cake provided for the occasion, had gone their rounds. The long Latin thanksgiving had been sung, and the *Miserere* intoned. The monks left the refectory, each turning and bowing to him who followed as he passed through the door on his way to the church; and Arnoul, leaving the line of hooded figures that preceded him, made his way

through the cloisters and past the guest-house to his friends Roger and Budd, who were still seated at the tables spread beneath the trees. There he stood, leaning against the gnarled stem of a great oak. The monks would leave the church in a moment, and the Abbot himself would come to say grace for the people—his own people of Buckfast—before they betook themselves to their wives and daughters and to their games on the green outside the Abbey precincts. Then there would be laughter and fun, much innocent sport and some rougher horse play, until vesper time.

The talk and laughter grew suddenly hushed as the tall form of the Abbot was seen coming towards the merry-makers. He was not alone. Lagging behind him was the Bishop, a little more ruddy, a little more smiling than before; then the chancellor, the priors of Torre and Buckfast, the chaplain and the clerks. The knights came too—Sir Robert de Helion whispering something to the Vicar at whose side he walked; and then, in a long white line, the brethren of the house and the converse brothers in their coarse brown habits. They stood, ranged in an irregular semicircle, around the tables while the thanksgiving was being said—the monks' hands, for the most part, hidden under their black scapulars, their eyes bent upon the earth. They were not the least striking figures in the assembly. Monks tall and short, monks scraggy and lean, monks with the deep lines of asceticism worn into their pale faces, and monks whom their pulse and potherbs left, like the three children of old, fatter and fairer than before. There were old monks whose listless eyes spoke of a long pilgrimage nearly done, of other sights hoped for than feasting and revelry; young monks in whose faces shone the fires of enthusiasm and zeal; all types

of men filling in the gap from Brother Peter of the Brent Moor grange to Brother Gregory who asked questions about his beloved sheep.

Grace was finished, and the Abbot lifted his hand for further silence. "My children," he said in a low, full voice, strongly French in its accent, though, for the occasion, he spoke in fluent English so that all, even the serfs, might understand him. "My children, you are come to do honour to our Lady of Buckfast and to St Benet, our holy Father, on his feast day." It was characteristic of the Abbot that he never spoke of himself. "Our Lady, surely, and St Benet, our Blessed Founder, are glad. They are pleased with your devotion. I trust you have eaten well. What means our poor community lacks is made up by the generosity of our good friends. And that word 'friends' brings me to my point. Among our most noble benefactors"—and the Abbot inclined his head towards the Bishop and the knightly friends of the house—"there is none more openhanded than Sir Robert de Helion. He has given to God and to the Abbey of St Mary freely in times past. He has a gift to make to-day. I do not know the tenor of his wishes, but his deed of gift shall be read before you all."

The Vicar came forward with a roll of parchment in his hand, from which depended a heavy leaden seal. "It is fitting," continued the Abbot, "that you should honour—all of us should honour—the benefactors of the Abbey. Are you not all children of St Mary's? Therefore shall you all hear the reading of his deed and honour the noble donor, Robert de Helion, knight and associate of our order."

The Vicar cleared his throat and stepped forward

again. He held the parchment close to his nose and gabbled the first few lines in a quick and almost inaudible voice. Helion covered his mouth and his chin with his hand. A mischievous smile lurked in his kindly grey eyes.

"Hem! Hum! *Omnibus et singulis, et cetera*. . . . My Lord," he whispered aside to the Abbot, "must I read all the legal jargon set out here at the beginning? No? To all and every man, then—and the rest that follows in due form."

"My Lord," he whispered again. "It is better that I paraphrase. The serfs have little scholarship."

The Abbot smiled and nodded his assent. He knew the pompous little man's weakness in the matter of latinity.

But Helion interfered. "No," he said. "The Vicar shall read it as it stands, or someone else shall read it for him." And then, turning to the Vicar himself, he added in an undertone, "Did I not explain it all to thee as we came together from the refectory? Read it as it stands, Sir Priest, and see that thou read it aright. It was drawn up by the best notary in Totnes; and he is here to listen to you read it."

"Yes! Yes!" answered the wretched Vicar. "I shall read it as it stands. But a paraphrase, Sir Roger. . . . And you told me what it all was. Nevertheless I shall do your bidding. It shall be read as it stands—word for word, I promise you."

He cleared his throat again and began, making a singularly bad translation of the notarial terms. At last he got to that part of the document that had been impressed upon his mind with so much care by Helion. His translation became freer, his emphasis more marked his speech slower; and he made a decided

pause at each telling point. “. . . ‘For the good of my soul . . . and in token of the especial devotion which I bear to our Lady of Buckfast and the Abbot and monks of the community there, I do give and convey to God and to Blessed Mary of Buckfast and to the monks who serve God in that place, all my land of Hosefenne, which is in the manor of South Holne . . . free from all exaction and service except of our Lord the King . . . which is the fortieth part of a knight’s fee . . . the Lord Abbot to pay to me and to my heirs a pound of wax every year upon the feast of the Assumption of our Lady. . . .

“‘And from the rents and revenues of the said land of Hosefenne the Lord Abbot is to provide every year sixty-four gallons of wine to be drunk by the community of monks at Buckfast . . . in the following manner, to wit:—sixteen gallons upon the feast of the Nativity of our Lord; sixteen gallons on Candlemas Day; sixteen gallons on Pentecost; and sixteen gallons on the Assumption of our Lady.’”

At this point the Vicar was interrupted by the delighted amusement of the assembly.

The Abbot looked serious. Several of the monks raised their eyes and hands towards heaven in their astonishment. Sir Robert de Helion beamed.

The Vicar cleared his throat again and proceeded to read.

“Hem! Hem! ‘But should it ever happen that the Father Abbot of Citeaux, or the Visitor, or the Abbot of this place, at any time should have the presumption to take away or diminish this allowance of wine; after the truth of the matter has been inquired into . . . and the seniors and graver monks of the whole community have been heard . . . I . . . or my heirs . . . shall

have the power . . . without any contradiction, to resume the said land . . . to their own use. . . .

“That this, my gift, may remain firm and inviolate for ever. . . . I have confirmed this writing by adding my seal.”

The Vicar stopped. He had come to the end of the paper. The Abbot still looked grave; but Helion stepped forward; and, taking the parchment from the Vicar's hands, passed it over to the notary to procure the signatures of the more noteworthy persons who were present.

It was not much to be wondered at that the good Abbot's face had lengthened as the reading of the charter continued. It was hardly what he had expected. An annual rent for tapers to be burnt at the shrine, or a grant of new pasture land upon the moors would have been more to his liking. But he accepted the gift of the kind-hearted donor in the same spirit as that in which it was so freely given; and, making nothing of his embarrassment at so public a reading of the document, he thanked the knight in appropriate words.

“Ah, yes, Father Abbot,” Helion replied to his little speech of thanks. “Better far what you use than what you hoard! You think only of the glory of the Abbey, and toil and build for those who are not yet born. I see that you have a little creature comfort: and, by St Benet, 'tis the best deed I have ever done you! But look to it, Father Abbot, that no stingy cellarer cuts short the wine, or Hosefenne comes back to me and mine again.”

The good knight pointed his words with little nods and beamed with pleasure at his gift and the success of his joke: and, as the people rose at a sign from the

Abbot to make their way to the green, he had his thanks paid in the ringing cheers of lusty throats.

His brother beckoned Arnoul to him aside. "I have scarce seen you to-day to speak to, Arnoul," he said; "and now I must go in and talk matters over for the last time with Father Abbot and the Bishop. You are to go abroad to study after all. The Bishop says it will be far better for you to go to France than to stay in England, and the Abbot seems to think so too."

"But, brother, this is sudden," stammered the boy, who, as neither his brother nor Abbot Benet had said anything upon the subject to him, had begun to think the Bishop's remark of the morning might be no more than pleasant banter. "Of course I am pleased to think I am to go abroad, but——"

"But there is no time now, my dear Arnoul, to say more. The Abbot will explain all to you. He bade me tell you to go to him in his cell as soon as vespers are over. I must join him now, and I shall be well upon my road to Woodleigh before *Magnificat* is sung. I have business with Sir Sigar to arrange. Good-bye, Arnoul! You will come to me anon at Woodleigh, before you go. 'Tis all arranged with Father Abbot, and he will tell you all after vespers. Good-bye, lad, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, brother," answered the boy, wondering at this sudden turn of events, mildly amazed at the guarded silence of his brother and the Abbot, thinking what all his friends at Buckfast would have to say to it.

The priest turned and followed the two dignitaries, who were by this time making their way back again towards the cloister. The knights and nobles had already passed out under the great gateway to their ladies, and the monks were making off in different

directions through the grounds for their hour of silent recreation.

Lay brothers began to clear the tables and carry them away, and Arnoul, still wondering and speculating as to whether Vipont had yet left, followed the rear-most through the gateway into the bright sunlight and dancing and laughter of the village green.

Vipont was nowhere to be seen, nor Sibilla. A few of the knights were standing apart, looking on at the rustic merrymaking; but, search as he would, he could catch no glimpse of her.

So he turned his thoughts to Budd and Roger—only to find that they, too, had disappeared. If they did not return till vespers, the great news would have to wait until after his interview with the Abbot. Well, after all, perhaps it was just as well; though he certainly should like to tell someone now. He would know all the plans when he had seen Abbot Benet. In the meantime, he would just keep his news to himself, and, until the vesper bell rang a pause to the dancing, he would amuse himself as best he might.

CHAPTER IV

ARNOUL THINKS OF PARIS

SILENCE, save for the cheeping of the birds in the cloister garth.

Arnoul walked along the echoing stone cloister and knocked upon the Abbot's door. Two sharp taps replied within, and, pushing the door open, he entered the cell of the Abbot. It was a bare and small cell, like all the others in the monastery; and here the Lord Abbot worked and prayed, and governed his community. He slept, with all the other monks of the house, in the common dormitory according to the rule. A few low wooden stools, a rough deal table, upon which lay two or three parchments, a hanging shelf holding a few folios lettered down the backs in heavy black-letter characters, a stand and a large wooden cross on the wall, like the one in the refectory—this was the furniture of the apartment.

The Abbot was seated at the table. He did not rise as Arnoul entered. The young man bent one knee and kissed his ring; then, taking his seat upon one of the other stools, he waited for the monk to begin.

"I go to Citeaux next month." The Abbot spoke in French.

"To the chapter?"

"Yes, to the chapter. You are to accompany me as far as Paris."

"So I am going to the University at last?"

"Without doubt. I talked it over with your brother and the Bishop when we were at Exeter for the synod. We had thought of Oxford and our house there. . . . But it is finally arranged now. Paris will do you good. You will see the world, and enlarge your mind. You have not felt," he continued almost wistfully, "any inclination to come back to us—to be one of us—in these two years?"

The Abbot was as gentle and tender as a mother towards all the members of his house. He was tenderness itself towards this lad who had dwelt so long under his protection. He who knew so well how to be stern and unbending in defence of the rights and prerogatives of his Abbey, who resisted unjust encroachments so bitterly, even though they came from the papal tax-gatherers themselves, that he had come to be looked upon by the outside world as a man devoid of kindly feeling, a monk in nature as in his dealings, with no thought but for the keeping of the rule and the aggrandisement of his house and order—he had a warm heart and a human under his black scapulary. His rigid exterior was but the mask for the kindest feeling and the gentlest care. He was always ready to spend himself for his community.

"None, Father Abbot. Since you sent me to live with Budd I have learned what it is to be free—free as the birds and the winds. I could not live again the life of silence and routine and obedience that I lived as a boy. I should rebel as often as I heard the bell ringing for an exercise. Forgive me, Father, if I pain you. You I love, and every monk of St Mary's, yes, and every stone in the cloister, too. But I will not be a monk. I cannot take the vows. The schools of Paris will do me good. You are right, Father Abbot. I

must see the great world and live its life. I must be free! Yes, I must be free!"

"Free!" echoed the Abbot sadly. "My poor boy, you little know what freedom means. You will be free to come and go—yes, and free, perchance, to wreck your life and break your heart. Better far the calm freedom of our cloister that strikes off the fetters of self-will. But, alas! I see that it is vain!"

"Believe me, Father. . . ."

"Yes, I know what you would say. It was a dream, perhaps, a foolish dream of mine to see you in the cloister—and we live in a waking world, not a dreaming one. But I had hoped that you had felt some call, some desire to come back to us at St Mary's, and——"

"When do we set out?"

"The chapter is in six weeks from now. That will give you time to make what preparations are necessary and to visit your brother at Woodleigh. He expects you there at the beginning of the week."

"And what am I to take?" asked Arnoul. "I shall need new clothes—and arms. Brother James told me of the students and their brawls when he last came from Oxford. And it is far worse, he says, at Paris. Think of it, Father Abbot, think of it—the narrow streets, the citizens all armed, the students with their swords and cudgels! I must have a stout sword of my own!" His eyes sparkled as he thought of the whirling life of a great city. "And my habit. . . . See! The best I had to wear for St Benet's feast! All stained—and torn, too, under the sleeves!"

"Brother George will see to your clothes. You can go to him to-morrow for what there is need of. And I shall see the armourer myself at Totnes bridge. I fear you must indeed have a weapon of some kind if you

are to travel. '*Qui acceperint gladium gladio peribunt*,'" the Abbot murmured to himself. "But you must only use it in self-defence, Arnoul, or in succouring the weak."

The colour came and went in the lad's cheeks. He was thinking far more of the new life he was to lead than of what the Abbot was saying. Still he answered, "Yes, Father Abbot, in self-defence." And the other continued, "Meanwhile, there is Woodleigh. You are to go next week. I shall be at Citeaux every year; but it may be long ere you will see Buckfast or Woodleigh and your brother again. May God bless you, lad, and our Lady's protection be over you!"

He made a sign that he had no more to say, and Arnoul, kneeling, kissed his ring again.

The moment the boy quitted the cloister he gave vent to his pent-up spirits. His hound was waiting for him at the monastery gate, and together they raced across the deserted green.

"Budd! Budd! Where have you been all this time? And where is Roger?" he shouted, as he came, hot and breathless, in sight of the good man sitting at his open door engaged in feathering a sheaf of clothyards. "I am going to Paris! At last! Think of that, Budd! This time, two months, I shall be there."

The granger pursed up his lips in a low whistle and nodded his head. He was adding the finishing touches to an arrow that he held in his hand, and, before he made any answer, he examined it slowly and critically several times. Apparently it was to his satisfaction, for at last he let it drop thoughtfully upon the little pile lying beside him upon the ground. He gazed upon his handiwork meditatively, then up towards the sky. He scratched his head, rubbed the side of his nose with

one finger, and finally summed up the situation in a comprehensive "Umph!"

The boy went on excitedly: "Paris, Budd! What do you say to that, Budd? Paris! And the Paris schools! Do you not hear me? Are you grown deaf? And what have you done with Roger?"

"Ay, I hear you well enough," grunted Budd. "You sing more loudly of Paris and your going there than Father Ambrose at his psalms at vespers. One would think that Paris was the gate of paradise, at least, to hear you. Have you no sadness in your heart at leaving Buckfast, boy, and us?"

"Yes, Budd, of course I have. You know that right well—none knows it better. But think! Paris, Budd and the great houses there! The throng of students and the crowded streets! The knights coming and going, and the King himself, perchance! The clash of arms, and the tourneys! I shall see the world, Budd And the schools! I shall sit under the great doctors of Paris. All the world resounds with their fame What is it the distich says?" He quoted the popular tag, translating it for Budd's benefit:—

*"Filii nobilium dum sint juniores
Mittuntur in Franciam fieri doctores."*

Perhaps I shall gain my doctor's cap and come back to England with——"

"With a broken head, an you come back at all," the granger finished his sentence brusquely. "Methinks there is more of knights and tourneys than book logic in your thoughts, and more crowded streets and brawls than schools or doctors. Ah, lad! did you but know it, there is more of peace and happiness in this quiet valley of the Dart than you can hope to

find in the schools of Paris, or elsewhere in the great world."

"Oh! Buckfast, Budd, with its sameness and its quiet! Father Abbot wants me to become a monk, and you would have me find a lord and be his page. I am tired of it all, Budd! Abbot Benet is kind, but he wearies me with his questions. 'Have you felt no call to serve God at St Mary's? Would you not be one of us?' And you too! Would you have me be page to old Nonant of Totnes? No! I am weary of doing nothing in your quiet valley. I have no wish to serve de Nonant. I am tired even of wandering through the woods and being my own master. I shall——"

"You will go to Paris, lad, and learn. You have said it. Ay! and when you have learnt all the doctors, your masters, have to teach you, what then? Will you teach in your turn, and sit preaching for the rest of your life to a crowd of frowsy clerks in some mean room or public square? Will you manage to find a fat living or a bishopric and be ruled by your clerk and chancellor like my Lord of Exeter?"

"Come hither, wife!" he called through the open doorway. "And you, Roger!" he shouted. "Leave off drinking the good wife's cider and come here! Here is Master Arnoul all agog with news. He has settled it with his brother and our Lord the Abbot, and he is going to Paris at the next chapter crossing."

The woman, a tidy, motherly body, and Roger, flushed with—be it confessed—his numerous potations, appeared on the threshold.

"To Paris!" ejaculated both in a breath, she with maternal solicitude, thinking of his scanty and ill-provided wardrobe, the man's heated brain scarce grasping what had been shouted at him.

"That is what I said," retorted Budd dryly. "He goes to Paris when my lord goes to Citeaux."

"And who will mend your rents and wash your clothes, Master Arnoul?" asked the kindly woman. "Isn't Devon good enough for you and Devon folk, that you must stand there smiling and dancing at the thought of leaving us? You have worn the clothes you stand in two years come Michaelmas, and heaven knows how often I have patched and darned them for you. And who will look after you and give you possets for your humours when you are sick? Your poor brother has no more sense than a baby to let you leave us all at Buckfast."

"Buckfast . . . ! Paris . . . !" hiccoughed Roger thickly. "Who's going to leave Buckfast? Who's going to Paris? What, Master Arnoul? I'll not believe it! It's not right! It's as bad as being a monk—that was his old idea—going away like that! And those rascally friars. . . ." He tailed off in a muddled statement of his grievance against the Franciscans and the palmer who had joined him on the road in the morning.

"Believe it or not as it liketh thee," Budd interrupted, putting a stop to his meandering, and silencing his wife's bursting eloquence with a frown. "It seems it is a fact, and Master Arnoul. . . . Sit down, man! Don't sway about like that! Master Arnoul is to leave us."

"I won't believe it!" Roger reasserted himself emphatically, dropping upon the bench. "Those cursed friars told me I should go to hell. I did not believe them, and I won't believe that our Master Arnoul is going away. What's the use . . . ?"

"Silence, beast!" Budd was getting angry, even with his bosom crony. "Silence, thou fool! Of a surety, thou shalt go to hell and burn eternally! If the holy

friars said it, it is true. And, when all is said, what matters it if thou dost burn? I'd pile the faggots up myself, would it keep the lad here at Buckfast!"

"Budd! Budd! What art thou saying? And thou a Christian man! Fie, husband, fie! And thy best friend, too! But it isn't true, is it, Master Arnoul?" she added, turning to the subject of the discussion. "You are not going to leave us?"

"Yes, dame, it is true. In a few days I go to Woodleigh, and then off to Paris with Father Abbot. But why do you all look so glum? I shall come back again, never fear—come back a great doctor, perhaps, or a belted knight, and be a credit to you all."

"Think, Budd," he added, turning to the two men, "and you, Roger, think! The scholars—forty thousand of them! Not like the fishermen and farmers of Devon, but scholars come together from the whole wide world! So many are they that they cannot be ranked in colleges, but are divided among the four great nations! Aren't you glad, Budd? Don't you congratulate me, Roger? And you, dame, think! There is something better than clothes and clouts, or being coddled with brews and possets. There is life in the great world, and arms, and glory, and honour——"

"Ay, and a cracked head," grunted Budd, "and a *de profundis*, as I told you before."

"And what of the fishing and the hunting?" put in Roger, the truth beginning to break through upon his cider-bemuddled intellect. "There's no fish in France. There's no hares at Paris."

"No; but there are the knights templars, Roger, and the hospitallers. There will be feasts such as we never have at Buckfast or Exeter, and shows and tourneys never seen in all England. Aren't you both glad that

I am going to see the world?" he asked, scanning the faces of the two men, and oblivious of the fact that the good wife was furtively wiping away a tear. Poor woman, she had no living children of her own.

"Glad, lad? Ay, if it please you! But we are sorry for ourselves." And the kind-hearted fellow blinked suspiciously himself. "Besides, there's no knowing when you are ever coming back. They say men spend half their lives studying at these great schools. And Arnoul, lad, my good woman and I may both be lying beneath the sod on yonder hill before you come back to your own country with a doctor's cap on your head or a white cross on your shoulder."

"Why do you talk like that, dear Budd?" the boy protested, throwing his arm impulsively around the man's neck. "Why, both of you will be hearty and hale for the next forty years; and I shall have you both proud of me ere ten are passed, never fear! And, dame, you can give me a collection of your simples to take to Paris with me; and when I mix your potions or smear myself with your ointments, I shall think of you and Buckfast, and make the more haste to learn that I may soon come back again. Stop groaning, Roger! One would think you had heard my passing bell to see you shake your head so! Fie, man! The drink has got at your wits! Nay, don't blubber like that, good Roger! It was the heat, most like, and the fatigue of the day, and . . . and . . . I've yet a month at Woodleigh to say good-bye to you in."

But Roger protested the more, with a thick utterance and many grunts, his unswerving devotion to his Master Arnoul, his undying hatred of the corded friars who, he had now fully persuaded himself, were at the bottom of it all. And the woman dried her tears and tried her

best alternately to smile at the boy's enthusiasm and frown at her drunken guest's maudlin mutterings.

But, Roger, if he saw her at all, was not to be silenced by a frown. "A curse upon these meddling vagabonds!" he growled. "I shall flesh an arrow in the next psalm-droning friar I meet with. Put my young master in a cell and feed him upon rye bread and peas, indeed! And rope him with a greasy cord! I will——" And he started up unsteadily to his feet to show the doughty deeds he would do when fate should come across his path in the shape of a Franciscan.

"A pest upon thee!" thundered Budd, now thoroughly out of temper with himself and the world in general. "Wife, what hast thou been giving to this drunken fool?" And then, without waiting to hear her answer— "He would have it"—in which home-brewed white ale figured as well as cider, he went on.

"A murrain on thee! And a pest upon the Lord Abbot and the schools of Paris as well! Come into the house, thou swine, and sleep thy addled brain sober!"

He half dragged, half pushed, the protesting Roger through the doorway and disappeared with him into the interior of the building, leaving the air thick with vociferations against everybody and everything, mingled with Roger's grunts and the drunken curses that he hurled at the unfortunate friars.

Arnoul sighed. It was hard that there should be such a bitter drop in his cup of happiness: Budd angry and Roger in liquor. His experience gave him no key to the problem that was hazily before his mind. Of course he was fond of them all, and of dear old Buckfast, but he did not know that the affection of eighteen is not that of maturer years. Excited with the idea of novelty, he could not understand the devotion of these simple

people, their wish to keep him among themselves. He sighed again—a puzzled sigh—and looked up. The woman was crying silently. He did not stop to think whether her tears were caused by her husband's rough words and implied censure, or by her own motherly love for himself. But she *was* crying. Without a thought, he flung his arms about her and kissed her on the cheek.

And then he turned away and strode off rapidly in the direction of the river.

CHAPTER V

THE TWO BROTHERS

THE setting sun cast long shadows over the tiny churchyard at Woodleigh as Arnoul rode towards his brother's dwelling. He had been deeply touched by the kindly and sincere affection of the simple folk at Buckfast with whom he had been living for the past many months ; and the thought of leaving all his good friends, the monks, came home to him now as it had not done at his first thought of going to Paris. He had still several weeks to spend at Woodleigh before he set out for France in the company of the Lord Abbot ; and he would certainly, he resolved, make the most of them with his friend Roger and his brother Sir Guy, the parish priest. The thought that he would never feel so young again came vaguely upon him as an instinctive feeling rather than as a definite thought. When he should return he would be older and changed. All the kindly folk he knew—the monks and the peasants—would have changed, too, and would have drifted apart from him. How long was he to be away from dear old Devon, after all ? It might, of course, be years.

Despite his desire to get away from what he knew so well, and to discover new things in the world that lay outside the valley of the Dart, it was not altogether a comforting thought. Why did things change at all ? Why, above all, should he change, to find the same old hills and heather, the same patient and weather-beaten faces, so different when he did come back ? Ten years,

even, would add little to the age of the moors. Even old Brother Paul, the gatekeeper at the Abbey, would be unaltered. But to him, when he came back, nothing would be the same. He realised dimly that it is we who change and develop in action and feeling and outlook, far more than the old monuments, the old friends, the old ideas, that stand almost still as we outstrip them in the race of life.

His brother, coming from evensong at the humble church, met him as he rode past the houses that lined the straggling street, and together they proceeded to the priest's lodging.

"So, Arnoul, you are here at last," said the priest, as his brother dismounted and walked beside him, leading his animal. "I have been expecting you all the day, and Roger has been up at least twice from his boat to ask if you were yet come. What has kept you so long upon the road?"

"I rode by Totnes, brother. Budd had business in the town, or said he had, and came with me."

"But Totnes lies not far off the straight road that runs from Buckfast; and here evensong is done, ere you are come."

"It was the armourer, Guy, who kept us, by the bridge. I took Budd there to see if the Abbot had bought me my arms. 'No; the Abbot had not been seen there.' But there were such fine arms and armour in the place! You should have seen them! And the armourer himself was fashioning so fair a blade, and his men were putting new rivets in the plates of old de Nonant's suit of mail! And he was so kind to us both! I told him that I was going to leave Devon for France and the Paris schools, and that the Father Abbot had promised me the arms I need. And he called his wife to bring

us wine and cakes. 'Not so rich,' he said, pouring it into the cups, 'as the wine of Burgundy, but the best we can grow in this country with its cold and ungenerous climate.'

"And then he showed us his store—knives and daggers and swords wrapped away in cloth rolls to keep them bright and keen, and greaves and inlaid breastplates hanging from the walls, and shining new casques, and old battered helmets, and a suit of chain armour brought from Italy—it was of Saracen work, and came from the crusades—that would lie within your two palms, so small it was, and yet would cover all your body. And he set aside two or three things that he said would do for a fine fellow like me going abroad to the great University—to show the Abbot when he came. And he told us tales—a tale for every piece of armour—of knights and wars and burgesses and——"

"And so you sat there and gossiped and wasted your time. Bethink you, Arnoul, you are no longer a boy to sit listening to a mercer's tales who wants to sell you his wares. And Budd! Budd is an old dotard to encourage you in it."

"Still, brother, the sun was high and the day hot, and it was pleasant at the armourer's——"

"Well, say no more about it. Though why you are so sudden become warlike I know not. Here we are now, at any rate. Take your horse to the stable and give him drink and fodder, and then come yourself and eat. Isobel will be grumbling that the supper is spoiled."

The curate entered the house, and Arnoul, having stabled his beast, shaken down a good litter of straw and placed a generous measure of corn in the manger, followed him into the low and raftered room in which their evening meal awaited them.

Old Isobel, for a servant, was a privileged person. She had been with her master's father before Arnoul was born, and looked upon the boy as, in a sense, her own especial property. Like most of the Buckfast and Woodleigh people she idolised the lad. And, indeed, his frank, boyish spirit, as yet untouched by those pre-occupations and cares that flow from either the joys or the sorrows of maturer years, his open smile, bestowed upon any who smiled upon him, his handsome, sunburnt features made it hard for anyone to do other than like him. But, as I say, Isobel was privileged. She it was who had nursed and cared for him in the place of his dead mother—Roger could not boast of that!—until, at his father's death, he had gone to Buckfast—and that was a bitter time for her. She had watched him growing up and had done her best to cure him of the childish ailments that he had. He had never been a strong boy, and when they took him away from her to the aluminate at the Abbey, she had given his brother a very bad hour of indignant protest and angry vehemence. Nevertheless he had gone, and Guy, well knowing the sterling devotion and honesty that were hidden under the old creature's rough exterior, had taken her to live with him and be his housekeeper.

"Sit you down, Arnoul, and eat. You must be famished after your ride," his brother began, setting the boy a good example by falling to heartily himself.

"And ne'er a word, or a look, or a greeting for old Isobel?" put in the old woman from the kitchen doorway, where she stood, arms akimbo. "Ah! Master Arnoul, 'twas always to Isobel you used to come first; but now, what with your horse and your journeys and your goings abroad, poor old Isobel is clean forgot."

"Isobel! Of course, you dear old thing, I have a

greeting for Isobel! Have I not been thinking of you and the good things you have been getting ready for me all the way hither from Totnes? How are you, Isobel? And how are the fowls?" he added, remembering her pride in the few ragged birds that pecked and clucked about the kitchen door.

"Well! Well! I cannot grumble at the health the good God gives me. And my fowls are well, too, thanks be to heaven! Only the brown hen is dead—the one that laid the big brown eggs. She died three weeks ago now. But get to your supper, laddie, or 'twill be cold."

As Arnoul fell upon the food with hearty zest and appetite, Sir Guy and old Isobel kept up a running comment upon the boy's appearance. Here they agreed. He had never looked more healthy in his life. But when the conversation veered to his approaching departure, the old woman used her privilege of saying exactly what she thought to the full. She argued and wrangled and stormed at her master for being so foolish as to trust his young brother alone to the unknown dangers of a town such as Paris then was—full of thieves and robbers, desperadoes and murderers from every quarter of the globe. In her excited imagination she saw naught but ruffians and cut-throats parading the narrow streets. She blamed Sir Guy and Abbot Benet and the Bishop with every censure she could lay her tongue to, nor did the reasoning of the one nor the soothing words of the other suffice to stay the flow of her eloquence.

"You took him away from me before; and now you will send him away again," she cried, "and he will be murdered, or die of the plague."

"Hold your tongue, you foolish old woman!" com-

manded Sir Guy, exasperated. But not heeding him, she continued with still stronger vituperation and abuse, until he bade her begone and leave them in peace ; and she vanished, amid the banging of pots and ladles, into the sanctuary of her own kitchen.

Arnoul and his brother sat well into the night, discussing the problem of the boy's future. Sir Guy was a good priest—a very good priest, as things went. But he found it hard sometimes to make ends meet at Woodleigh. Especially when he saw others enjoying the easy fruits of richer benefices.

"You might," he suggested, "come back to a canonry—or even be an archdeacon—when you have finished your course. Indeed, perhaps the Bishop will offer you a canonry before you go, so that you will not have any money matters to worry about when you get there. Or, if it is not a canonry, at least let us hope for some benefice or other that will enable you to finish your studies. I know the Bishop likes you. Then there's the Abbot, too. He told me he would help. And I, of course, shall do all I can. If I only had all your opportunities, now. . . .

"Or there are the military orders—the knights of the Temple, for example. There's a chance to get on if one is a templar, too. But work hard at Paris, whatever you do, Arnoul! Knowledge is all the thing now. It pays everywhere. . . . Or if you have no vocation, and no one offers you a benefice, if the life of the templars does not attract you, there is the law. Why, even Master Bartholomew, the notary at Totnes, makes a pretty sum, drawing up his deeds and instruments. But 'ware the Jews, Arnoul! Paris is full of Jews, so 'tis said. And never borrow what you cannot pay back."

Thus he continued, giving advice and putting before the lad the various chances of his possible careers, until the boy's answers became fewer and fewer, until he saw the tired head nodding, and the closing eyes told him that it was high time for them both to get to bed.

"One thing more," he added, as Arnoul shook himself awake and stood there, ready to say good-night and retire. "I am going to Moreleigh to-morrow. The anniversary of Vipont's wife is near, and his own Mass priest is ill. It is probable that I shall have to read the masses for him. You have not forgotten how to answer the Mass since you left the aluminate, have you? No? Well, if I go, I shall take you with me. You will like the castle, and Sir Sigar is an openhanded man, if he is bad tempered. But for such as he, I could not live at all."

Arnoul thought rather, perhaps, of the hardness of Sir Sigar's hand than of his generosity. He would see Sibilla again, too, if he went to Moreleigh. At least he hoped so. So he professed himself willing to go and perfectly able to answer the priest's Mass. He was very sleepy. The excitement of the last few days was telling, and he had had a hard, long day of it. He hardly heard his brother's last words to him as, with a tired good-night, he made his way to the door and retired to bed.

CHAPTER VI

THE LADY SIBILLA

THE morrow dawned bright and warm, a light mist gently rising from the valleys as the sun shone forth in its splendour. Arnoul was up betimes, and had tended his horse before Sir Guy came back from the church. They broke fast together and, when the sun was well risen in the heavens, set out towards Moreleigh.

All the scents and sounds of spring accompanied them. The buds had all broken into leaf on the trees and hedges, and flowers peeped out, yellow cowslips and purple violets clustering together in the green-sward. The odour of grass and leaves, just fresh from the morning dew, and that sweetest of all odours, damp, wholesome mother earth, came upon their nostrils. It was a day to be alive in. Both the brothers felt the charm and witchery of the woods. Arnoul threw out his chest, inhaling the fragrant air.

They talked on the way of many things, but always recurring to the main theme that was uppermost in their minds—the lad's approaching journey and the life he was to lead at Paris.

At length they came in sight of Moreleigh. The castle lay upon a plateau that sloped away precipitously behind it and upon either hand. The frowning gateway that broke the monotony of the embattled wall was flanked at either side by short, projecting towers, their narrow openings giving upon the entrance and

commanding the iron-studded portcullis itself, as well as all that part of the plateau by which access to the castle was alone possible.

Sir Guy and Arnoul walked leisurely down the slope to the plateau and passed unchallenged beneath the portcullis. There were a few of the retainers and a page standing together in the courtyard, of whom Sir Guy asked if their lord were in the castle. One surly fellow answered that he was not yet come from his ride; that he would return anon.

"No matter," said Sir Guy. "Time does not press so but that I can await him." And he moved a little to one side. The men continued talking.

"I tell you"—it was the surly man who spoke—"that it was my lord's favourite hawk."

"Nothing of the kind," broke in another. "He cared no more for one than for another. 'Twas the page William that angered him."

"An't please you," the boy answered for himself, "I did not anger him at all. He was already in a rage when I bore him his horn of mead—and he dashed it to the ground."

"Well! 'tis all one," grumbled another. "When you have served Sir Sigar Vipont as long as I have, you'll learn to take him as you find him. He is angered because—because he is angered, that is all; and there's no more to be said about it. Talking will not mend it, and knowing the reason of his anger will not make him one whit the less angry."

"That, at least, is true," the surly one commented. "I pity the man or maid who crosses him."

Sir Guy turned again and made a step towards the group. "If Sir Sigar be yet some time away, perchance the Lady Sibilla is in the castle with her women?"

"The Lady Sibilla will be now in the ante-chamber of the great hall, awaiting my lord, her father. It is her custom to meet him there when he returns from his ride. Would you speak with her? Hither, page! Acquaint thy lady that Sir Guy the priest would speak with her. Follow the page, Sir Priest!"

The two brothers waited at the foot of the steps leading to the hall, until the page returned and bade them go forward. They passed up the low and broad flight of stone steps and found themselves in the ante-chamber where she stood, a hand resting upon one of the sculptured lions that guarded the entry. Arnoul noticed the device of the Viponts between the stone paws—a device repeated a hundred times and in a hundred places throughout the apartment. The chamber was dark, with its hanging tapestries on the walls and its carvings overhead. It was lit only by two narrow lancet windows above the entry. Behind the maid was the door that led to the great hall itself, covered now by heavy curtains of rich, thick, brocaded work.

The Lady Sibilla made Sir Guy and Arnoul welcome, coming forward to meet them. She was dressed in a gown and kirtle of some loose, flowing material of a pale grass-green, held in at the waist with a girdle and clasps. The expression of her brown eyes was thoughtful and serious—too thoughtful and too serious, perhaps, for a maid of her years. But a smile lurked ever in their liquid depths and played about the corners of her lips. She was pale, too, with an unusual pallor, intensified by the clustering masses of dark, flowing hair that escaped from beneath the golden fillet with which it was bound and rippled down over her shoulders.

Sir Guy bent over her hand respectfully and named his younger brother to her. The lad saluted her with

an inclination half awkward, half stately—with a sort of innate grace and courtliness. He felt bashful and unaccustomed in her presence. But she put him at his ease at once with a kindly word and frank, open smile.

“I remember,” she said, “I remember you long, long ago, when you were but a little lad and I a tiny maid. Besides, I saw you at the feast at the Abbey—and knew you then, too.”

The lad coloured. Had Sibilla seen him as he gazed after her at Buckfast? He hoped not, at any rate. But she continued, speaking with Sir Guy :

“My father will return before long. I know—or at least I can guess—what you want with him. To arrange, is it not, the masses for my poor mother’s soul?”

Sir Guy nodded his assent. “Yes,” he said, “that has brought us to Moreleigh.”

As for Arnoul, he could not tear his eyes from the maiden’s face.

The Lady Sibilla spoke again. “I await my father here. It is his custom to ride every day, and he always expects to find me here on his return. Since he cannot now be long, I pray you tarry in the guest-room till he come.”

They saluted her again and descended the steps. The page, waiting for them in the courtyard, conducted them to the guest-chamber which gave upon the hall. And there they seated themselves, waiting for Sir Sigar’s return.

The Lady Sibilla stood alone, she also waiting to greet her father.

A clatter of hoofs in the courtyard. The running to and fro of many feet. A volley of curses and a cry.

The girl knew the voice. It was the younger of the pages—a delicate, fair-haired lad—who had tasted his master's riding lash. The whip whistled again through the air, and again the shrill cry rang out. She could hear the horse snorting and plunging on the stones. Her own breath came and went quickly. Should she go to her father in the courtyard? Should she stay and await his coming? She made up her mind quickly, as she heard a third shriek following on the whistling descent of the lash, and, hiding the misery of her heart by a brave, if piteous, smile, she turned to go.

But hurried steps neared her. The clank of spurs rattled on the stone stair. The hangings were parted violently—torn asunder. Her father stood before her. But he did not stop to embrace her. He passed her by as though he did not see her, and stamped up, cursing, the whole length of the great echoing chamber to the head of the oaken table that measured it.

And there he flung himself down at the farthest end, still muttering and swearing, in the carved seat at the head of the table. His dog slunk in and lay beside his master. And the man frowned and glared, beating with his clenched fist and with his riding-whip upon the board before him. The great swollen veins stood out upon his brow, and the thin lips were drawn back over his gums, so that his teeth glistened like the teeth of some wild animal. The pages trembled in the courtyard below. The old seneschal and the handful of retainers kept themselves prudently out of sight, for they knew that Sigar Vipont, Lord of Moreleigh, had given himself up, body and soul, into the grip of an ungovernable fury.

Poor Sibilla stood trembling and fearful at the farther

end of the hall. She had never seen her father like this, now almost inarticulate with rage—his curses coming so thick and fast from his lips that they sounded like the snarlings and yelpings of some wild beast. She sent up a prayer to her dead mother and to her patron saints, as, summoning up her courage, she drew near to the furious knight and laid her little hand upon his sleeve.

He shook her off roughly with an oath. His visage was demoniacal. The unhappy maiden wrung her hands and sobbed. The dog's bristles rose as he growled and came sniffing, first at the weeping girl, then at his furious master; but a brutal cut of the whip sent him howling away, and he slunk back, whimpering, into a corner.

Again the girl came forward, pale and resolute. Her voice had no trace of tears or sobs in it, as she addressed him.

"Why do you beat the hound, father?" she asked. "He has done no wrong. And why did you strike poor Oswald? What had he done to anger you?"

The knight's face grew purple, and the muscles of his throat and jaw worked convulsively as her reproachful voice fell upon his ear. He was beside himself with anger as he started up, throwing the great oaken chair with a crash to the ground in his violence, and brandishing the heavy riding-whip in his uplifted hand.

"By God, and by the wounds of God!" he shouted. "I will brook no interfering meddling in my house, not even from you, Sibilla! Is it not enough to be served by carrion vultures, that my own daughter must turn against me and ask me for reasons for doing as I please?"

He broke into a string of brutal curses and raised the

whip, the thonged end in his hand, above his head to strike at her. It was a dangerous weapon for an infuriated man to use. She knew he did not mean it—how could he mean it, her own father, so loving and so kind?—but she shrank before him trembling, lifting her arm above to guard her head, and cowering towards the arras.

The dog sprang forward, growling, its bristles erect, its eyes showing red, towards his mistress. Vipont struck at it again and again, rolling out a torrent of blasphemous cursing and abuse. But the beast kept out of reach, showing its fangs and growling the more, and the girl, shrinking and cowering, the tears dried in her eyes by very fear and shame, passed the long length of the hall, crouching by the arras, praying to God that none should see her father thus possessed. But his mad rage held, and he followed her the whole length of the empty room, upbraiding and cursing.

The seneschal and the pages with two or three of the bowmen crept silently to the ante-chamber. They knew—far better even than his own daughter—what Vipont was capable of doing in these mad outbursts of ungovernable, unreasoning wrath. Still they never dreamed that any harm could come to the maid at her father's hands. Most like, 'twas only the dog that angered him, they thought, and he would be shouting for them to bear the carcass forth—for Vipont was ever ready with the steel when in his rage. The clamour filled the courtyard and the whole castle.

Arnoul pulled at his brother's cassock. "Come," he said. "Hasten! There is murder done!"

He dashed up the short stairway and, tearing the heavy curtains apart, burst breathless into the hall. The men entered behind him and stood about the door,

Sir Guy's pale face strangely outlined against the dark panelling of the lofty chamber.

None too soon! Vipont, a furious light, as of madness, in his eyes, his face twisted and distorted, stood over his daughter, the heavy whip lifted in his outstretched hand. The girl uttered low cries and moans, turning her white face, drawn with grief and fear and shame, away from the sight of her maniacal father. The sun's rays struck upon her dress through the diamond panes of a narrow lancet window and stained it red as blood. The hound snarled and growled, turning fierce eyes and bared fangs towards its master. The men at the doorway caught their breath in a quick, sibilant hiss and started forward to protect the girl. The outstretched arm seemed poised through an eternity—an arm of stone, of steel, of nerves and sinews petrified. With an oath, the tense muscles relaxing, he flung himself upon her.

But Arnoul was quicker. He leaped at the man like a wild cat and caught the descending hand, shouting the while to the others for help. Vipont writhed and struggled, turning his rage now upon the boy, cursing, and fumbling for the dagger at his side. But the lad's wrists were strong as steel and he kept his grip, though he was shaken about and worried like a rat.

With almost superhuman strength, Vipont lifted him from the floor and whirled him, hanging from his wrists, towards the ground. This was their opportunity. The men rushed in from behind and caught their lord's arms above the elbows, dragging them backwards till they almost cracked. The seneschal wrested the heavy whip from his hand, and Arnoul stood back, gasping and panting, his heart beating and thumping on his ribs, a queer, choking sensation in his throat. It was all over

in an instant. There would be a heavy reckoning later with their lord, no doubt; but murder would surely have been done without some such interference.

Vipont stood there, held fast by his own retainers, impotent and furious. His hands worked convulsively at his sides, the veins standing out like whipcord upon his brow, torrents of oaths still falling from his working lips. Sibilla had risen from the ground and was weeping silently. Her bosom swelled with sobs. Her pride, her love, her honour had been so cruelly wronged.

Then Sir Guy came forward and led her away from the great hall, back to her women. Not a word did he speak; only he took her hand and led her forth weeping. And Vipont struggled and cursed and clawed at his side for the weapon as she went. The pages and the remaining bowmen stood, open-mouthed, at the door until the seneschal motioned them away.

And then Arnoul was witness of a strange thing. The veins subsided on Sir Sigar's forehead, and his hands ceased to claw and fumble at his side. He seemed on a sudden to collapse and shrink into himself. Instead of oaths, sobbing groans came from his lips. His rage had left him spent and broken, and he trembled and shook like a man—a very old man—shaken by the palsy. The seneschal bade the archers loose their master and lead him to a seat. Still cowed and broken, he fell, all huddled together, into the chair they brought him. Only the tears ran down his two cheeks and choking sobs shook his entire body.

"Let him be," whispered the steward. "He will come to himself now. The fit never lasts, but wears itself away like this. Only, the maiden! Poor child, she has never seen her father in this his worst of moods.

Never before has he raised his whip to her. Indeed, he has never lost himself like this before."

Vipont had folded his arms upon the table before him and bowed his head upon them, hiding his face. The sobs still shook his frame and echoed through the vast spaces of the room. He looked so pitiful and old—that heaped-up figure sobbing in the lonely oaken chair—so crushed and old and broken, that the boy had it in his heart almost to pity him. But he remembered what he had seen, and became stern and hard again.

The seneschal signed to him to follow; and together they withdrew, leaving the knight alone, sobbing in the great empty hall.

"Surely," said Arnoul, as soon as the heavy curtains had closed behind them, hiding the pitiful figure, "surely the maiden is not safe with him. He is mad—stark mad. Has she no place where she could go—no people of her own to save her from a repetition of such danger?"

"There is her aunt at Exeter, the Abbess of the Benedictines there," replied the seneschal. "But she would never go. No! She certainly would never consent to go. Nothing would tear her from her father."

"But she must go!" insisted the boy imperatively. "She must be got away from such a madman. Guy shall speak with her and persuade her. Abbot Benet will reason with Sir Sigar himself. Surely he will listen to reason when once he is calm again! And, if need be, the Bishop——"

"She will not listen, and Sir Sigar will hear no reason. Let be, young sir, let be!" repeated the seneschal. "I know what I am saying. The Lady Sibilla will never be persuaded to leave her father.

“But see! There is your brother, Sir Guy,” he went on. “You will want a bite, both of you, and a sup before you return to Woodleigh. And all your journey here in vain! Alas! It is not to be helped. A pity! Yes, a pity! Come, Sir Guy! Come, young sir!”—the good seneschal’s thoughts turned from his present anxiety to the comforting of the inner man—“We shall find a cold pasty, doubtless, and a flagon or so of wine, if we do but look for it; and, after so arduous a morning’s work, so disquieting a scene, so terrible an adventure, faith of God! we all need it.”

So saying, he disappeared through a low archway, Sir Guy and Arnoul following close at his heels.

CHAPTER VII

SHADOWS OF LIFE

“AND so, Arnoul”—it was Sir Guy speaking—“we can do nothing here to-day. Pigot says that he can arrange nothing without his lord’s assent. He dare not have the chapel set in order. He dare not fix the hour for the masses. We had best go back again to Woodleigh and wait until Sir Sigar is in a better mind.”

“Indeed, Sir Guy,” put in the seneschal, the third of the group standing beneath the Norman archway that, flanked by its two round towers, gave entrance to the castle; “indeed it is best. Sir Sigar is quiet now, but I will not be answerable if he is disturbed again to-day. I think . . . I fear sometimes that my poor lord will lose his reason altogether, so frequent have these mad paroxysms become of late. No! No, Sir Guy! Best return to Woodleigh and come again to-morrow or the next day when he will be calm.”

“But the maid,” put in Arnoul. “Remember, Pigot, what I told you. She must be guarded from every chance of harm. Can’t you persuade the Abbess to have her for a time? Can’t you make her go . . . some pretext. . . . It would not be difficult to find one.”

“It would be a wise plan,” said Sir Guy, advising in his turn, “to send her away to her aunt. Yes, Pigot, Arnoul is right. Think of an excuse.”

“No! No! No!” answered the seneschal. “Leave it alone! It is best left alone. She would never be persuaded to leave. And Sir Sigar. . . . I fear for Sir

Sigar if she went. It shall not happen again, Sir Guy. I assure you, Master Arnoul, it shall not happen again. I shall be always within call. . . ."

"As you were to-day," commented Arnoul dryly.

"Nay; but I shall be ready. It shall not occur again. And the Lady Sibilla will not go. I tell you she would not go. There is no use thinking of it . . . none! Leave it alone! She will come to no harm."

As he spoke, Sibilla herself came towards them. Her eyes were red with weeping, the perfect oval of her face all sad and mournful. But she bore herself stately, like a queen, as she crossed the paved courtyard. She came straight up to Arnoul and, the long lashes sweeping her downcast eyes, her rose-red lips quivering with emotion, addressed him.

"Sir," she said, plucking at one long sleeve with nervous fingers, "believe me, I am not ungrateful. To-day you shielded me from danger. Perhaps . . . perhaps, you saved my life."

Her voice trembled, and the tears welled again as she remembered how and why.

"But, I pray you, think not hardly of my father. You have not seen him. It was some fearful demon that possessed him that you saw, and not, not my father. He is so kind and good, so loving and so tender. They say that he is hard and cruel. He may be hard at times, but he is not cruel. Believe me that he is not—he never means to be cruel. I am sure he is not. Poor father," she went on tenderly, "my poor father!" And her bosom rose and fell with sobs, so that she could not speak.

Arnoul longed to console her, but the words stuck in his throat. Sir Guy, with, for him, unusual tactfulness, saw their embarrassment and drew the seneschal aside.

Then, looking up again at him, she smiled through her tears.

"But I am very grateful," she said again.

"It was nothing," replied Arnoul, finding his tongue at last. "Nothing at all. I did but what anyone would have done with an angry man."

"Yet Pigot did not do it," she retorted, "nor Henry, nor great, strong Gilbert, neither. None of them moved but you. It was so noble and so brave."

"Nay, lady! It was nothing," insisted the lad, blushing red beneath the fire of her eyes. "And Sir Sigar was but angry. Doubtless he meant nothing by his threats."

She flashed a grateful look upon him for his mercy. Her father was so dear to her—her love, her pride in him, so great and faithful.

"He would have turned it to a jest," the boy went on, "and you the first to laugh with him on it afterwards."

"Indeed, you are near the mark," the maid replied quickly, glad of the chance to shield her father. "I have but now been with him. And, oh! he is so sorry that he gave way to his evil temper. Something had crossed him ere he set out this morning, and all was wrong where'er he went to-day. He did not mean it. Oh, believe me, it was not meant! And now he grieves and sorrows so. He kissed me thrice before I came hither, and, knowing what I was to do, he let me come. He almost wept as he asked me my forgiveness. Poor father!" sighed the maid. "An evil spirit comes over him at times and seems to drive his reason from its seat."

"But, maiden, are you safe alone here. . . .?"

That was wrong. He set the wrong chords quivering in her heart.

"Safe!" she repeated, her eyes flashing lightnings. "Am I safe? Where could I be safer than in my own home and with my father to protect me? Safe? Why do you look at me like that?"

And Arnoul hastened to explain, plunging still deeper in the slough of mistaken kindness. "I meant," he stammered, "what if Sir Sigar were to break out again? What if the madness of this day came upon him when none were near to succour or to bring you help?"

"My father will not give way to his rage again. Never will he lose control of his passions as he did to-day." She raised her little head proudly as she answered for herself and for her father.

Arnoul saw his mistake and corrected it, though not without misgivings. And the girl, blinded by her great love, became gracious again. She took a tiny ornament, a little chiselled golden casket, from the chain about her throat and gave it to him. It was, she explained, a reliquary, and contained a precious fragment of the true cross upon which the Lord Christ hung. She begged him to accept it as a token—her memory of his bravery, her recognition, her gratitude. And then they spoke of Paris—that he was going from Devon to the famous schools she had learnt from her women, who knew all the comings and goings of the countryside. She knew that he was poor, and yet the delicate sense of her pride forbade her offering, even in her father's name, the assistance that would have been so easy.

Instead, she gave the reliquary, and bade him call upon Sigar Vipont whenever he was in trouble or had need. They continued long speaking of his plans, he shaking off his shyness and telling of all his youthful hopes with animation and no lack of words, she encouraging him and spurring him on by her gentle

approval. They looked into each other's eyes, these two, in the innocence and freshness of their youth, standing at the gate of the great world where their paths diverged.

He told her of Guy's high hopes for him, the means discussed, the ends proposed ; of the knights templars, the law, the ecclesiastical state. Only here her eyes opened wide, when he spoke of prelaties and prebends. Surely her knight of the morning was not going to be a priest like Sir Guy, and wear a shabby black cassock ! And she bade him think of doughty deeds and noble fame, her pouting lips, her sparkling eyes, betraying the halo of romance with which she already clothed him.

And he, too, felt the spell of her eyes and the witchery of her presence, so that he reddened and grew white by turns, and spoke like some great, awkward boy, and not like a man of eighteen full years, ready to gird on his sword and go forth to the conquest of knowledge and the world.

And then she took a riband and tied it in a loop and hung the reliquary upon it and set it round his neck, and spoke once more of her father and his great repentance for his evil mood. And he kissed the relic reverently, as a good Christian should, and hid it away in his breast. He spoke kindly of Sir Sigar, too, and with fresh excuses for his rage.

And thus they spoke, looking all the while into each other's eyes, fresh, innocent and young, until Sir Guy and the seneschal, impatient, drew within earshot again.

On the way back to Woodleigh, Arnoul was more silent than was usual, more reserved. His brother pressed him with questions as to what the Lady Sibilla had been saying to him ; and he answered, truthfully enough, that she had thanked him and spoken of her

father—excusing, explaining, exonerating—in her great love for him. But he said nothing of the gift of the relic, nor of himself, nor of the maid. Only he felt the little golden box lying warm upon his bosom and his heart beat with strange and new emotions.

Thus it was that Arnoul was brought up and loved by monks, and loved and taught his woodcraft and his simple knowledge of the world by cottars and boatmen. Thus he was destined for the great schools of Paris by his kinsman, Abbot Benet, that he might reap the fruits of knowledge and grow a learned and a holy man ; by Sir Guy, his brother, that he should stretch forth his hand and pluck the richest prize that either Church or world might place within his reach. Thus simple Budd and honest Roger—ay, and Isobel, too—strove their best to keep him in their own land of Devon. Thus, a second time, the Grim Sisters had spun and twisted the strands of Sigar's life and his together. And thus, amid all this play and cross-play of motives and influences, a grateful maiden's glance had found a way to reach his heart, a maiden's gift lay hidden in his breast.

Of course the lad did not reason with himself nor try to separate the various influences that came into his life. He, certainly, could not have said what effect the Cistercian aluminate had had upon his character, nor how far it was afterwards modified by his free, unfettered after life at Buckfast. And Guy's dreams of great careers that lay before him, he would not have been able to tell how they had affected him—those golden dreams of Sir Guy, the poor priest of Woodleigh. But all had brought their something to him—Guy's dreams no less than Abbot Benet's advice ; the maudlin sorrow of drunken Roger, as well as the jovial jesting of the Bishop. Now there was a new factor entered in—

Sibilla Vipont. All dumbly striving within him towards some expression—what it would be the future alone could show—there they all were. But he did not separate or analyse, for the very good reason that he never thought of himself at all or of his consciousness ; and for the better reason still, that he could not have done so had he tried.

He was here, at any rate, just like any other human boy of eighteen, or like any man of eighty, for the matter of that.

Motives and influences come and go, and shift and patch, and build and pull down again, until the strong one comes, on which we act and sometimes frame our life. Afterwards we can point to the strongest motive and say that was our reason for doing as we did. Sometimes we can trace it back through a growing maze of other motives—all the dancing motes that gyre and twist about in what we call our consciousness. But it always escapes us somewhere in the maze, for there are ourselves as well as motives to reckon with ; and when we find that the weakest has become the strongest, and the strongest sunk back into nothingness, then we realise that we, too, have some hand in making motives what they really are—that it is not always the circumstance that forms the man.

If Arnoul could have thought it all out, and reasoned, and analysed himself as though he were some third person ; if he could have done what nobody can do—looked upon himself, his scrutiny uninfluenced by the actual play of living, pulsing feelings within him—he would doubtless have come to some such a conclusion as this ; but he did not reason or analyse or think at all.

He trudged on with his brother along the winding path that led towards the priest's home at Woodleigh. And the fresh country air, coming up from the western sea, filled his lungs and made him glad to be alive. For healthy boys of eighteen are not given to being introspective. They are still human animals under the thin veneer of whatever civilisation they happen to belong to ; and they give as little real thought to the future as they worry about the present.

The two brothers walked on in silence under the arching branches of the trees that lined their path. Arnoul struck with a hazel switch plucked from the hedge at the heads of daffodils and primroses—happy and buoyant. He was thinking of the maiden and of the golden reliquary that hung about his neck ; though, had he been asked, he would probably have answered that his thoughts were of his impending voyage to Paris—and this, no doubt, with truth, for the two were by this time inextricably tangled up in his mind.

Sir Guy, his cassock swishing against his legs, strode on, imagining fresh projects, new and higher aims, for his brother's welfare. They loved each other, these two, so strangely dissimilar in every point. The priest, poor as he was, had no personal motive in wishing his only brother to make his way in the world. His horizon was bounded by the limits of his parish of Woodleigh ; and though he sometimes sighed as he saw others fall into the richer livings that lay lord or bishop or chapter had in their bestowal, his sighs were not prompted by desires of advancement so much as because his own cure was so difficult and so meagre. He desired little, if anything, for himself ; but for his brother—that was not at all the same thing. Arnoul must not grind and pinch and eke out the means as he always had to do.

He, at least, must look out upon life with other eyes. There was no reason why his path should not be a rose-girt one; and, as far, at any rate, as Sir Guy's advice and interest could help him to it, it should be both rose-girt and golden.

When he broke the silence, it was to speak of men who had already carved out positions for themselves in the Church, and of those who were on the high-road to preferment and dignities. And though then, as now, birth and wealth had their part to play in the getting of honours and sinecures and high positions, neither poverty nor lack of gentle blood was an absolute obstacle to them. It was a subtle and a ready way of inflaming the lad's mind with desire for wealth and place and power. He was poor, truly; but Sir Guy would never allow him to forget that the best blood of Devon ran in his veins.

And so he spoke of those who had forced their way upwards by sheer strength and doggedness of character. There was Lodosewell, the chancellor, and Ermeston, the keeper of the seal, who ruled good, weak Bishop Blondy with a rod of iron. These men had come to the fore, and had carved out their fortunes well. Yet neither Lodosewells nor Ermestons were to be compared to Arnoul de Valletort. And then, there was Bronescomb, too, Walter Bronescomb who, as a matter of fact, afterwards did become Bishop of Exeter. He was a coming man, and his parentage was poor enough, certainly, and mean. He had nothing to help him forward but his own abilities and his dogged purpose to get on; and already he had worked himself out of the rank and file, and forced himself up to honours and position.

The boy took it all in. He was listening attentively

enough and making his own comments upon the names as they came up. For all its silence, there was little that was not known of ecclesiastical doings at the Abbey. And Arnoul probably knew quite as much as Guy himself of all the personages and their histories, as they were repeated to him.

Poor Guy, the boy wondered, why did he not try to get on himself, if he thought so much of success? Still, he certainly would do his best. He would forge ahead, too, once he found himself in Paris. He had no misgivings that he would fail in anything. On the contrary, he was quite certain that, whatever he did, he would succeed in it. It was not conceit or self-sufficiency, but the mere expansion of his nature, the surging of a hope that had never known any real disappointment, the freshness and vigour of his buoyant youth, that made him so confident.

So they walked on, under the curving boughs, towards Woodleigh—Sir Guy, ever dreaming, planning, scheming, speaking of Lodosewell and Bronescomb; Arnoul still listening and commenting, smiting off with his stick the heads of the yellow primroses at the roadside, his hand resting on the golden relic case that was hidden in his breast.

CHAPTER VIII

SIR SIGAR AND A FAREWELL

A LEAGUE below Woodleigh the River Avon broadens out into one of those many tidal indentations that so fret and fray the whole southern coast of Devon. Nowhere in its short course from Avon Head in the lower moorland, where it rises between Fox Tor and Holne Ridge, down to within a mile or so from the coast, does it exceed the proportions of a small stream. South of Peter's Cross, it is true, where for a space it tinkles merrily along beside the Abbot's Way, three little streamlets join to meet it, and it does its best to rise and swell itself up to a dignity that affluent waters ought to lend a river. But it is a little stream still, even when it has boasted of three tributaries; and it remains a little stream for all the creeks and brooks and rivulets it manages to entice into its bosom as it flows along to the sea.

It cannot boast, like Tamar, of its length or importance; though it fusses and fidgets in its bed as though it were a very important river indeed. It has not an embouchure like stately Dart, nor even like tiny Yealm, with its scarce three leagues of happy life behind it, to justify the bursting pride with which it meets the ocean. But it has what none of its rivals all the way from Plymouth Sound to Exe have got: it has an island.

A tiny island, it is true, standing off a bare quarter of a mile from the mainland, in proud and solitary isolation. The tides swirl round it as they come in, pushing

the moor-drained stream back upon itself up at the head of the estuary, and they swirl round it as they draw back again, freeing the sullen, pent-up water of the stream. Twice a day they come and go—sometimes sleek and smiling, lapping on the shore as though carressing it; sometimes rushing and ravening, the curling waves, like great, hungry monsters, tearing at the red cliffs all along the coast.

But the tiny island is long used to the ocean and its moods. It basks in the hot sun, with the wavelets singing it to sleep; and it feels the salt scuds and stinging whips of driving spray indifferently. When the leaden sky bends down over the churning water and the dull ocean lifts up its arms towards the leaden sky, and all the world is wrapped in stormlight, it lies quite still, though the trailing storm swathes it in mists, and the waves leap at it like dogs unleashed. And when the storm has passed, and the sun shines out again, then it lies glistening and gleaming, smiling ever because it gives the fussy little river so unique a title to distinction.

Arnoul stepped into the boat that had carried him from the mainland, and took his seat at the stern. Roger gave the craft a shove, sending it gliding out from the shore upon the calm water, and threw his legs over the bow. Neither spoke much for a while. It was the last week of the lad's sojourn at Woodleigh, and his approaching departure had been the principal theme of discussion all the day. For honest Roger had not seen overmuch of him during his short stay. He had his daily toil to attend to; and when he found himself at Sir Guy's lodging on an off day, or of an evening, he had generally discovered that Arnoul was not there or was busy with the priest. So he had been obliged

to fall back upon old Isobel, in the kitchen, and talk of a subject that was most congenial to them both and uppermost in both their minds.

There was a long outstanding jealousy between the fisherman and the old housekeeper over Arnoul ; but, like many jealous persons, and all spiteful ones, they had no small mutual consolation in discussing the object of their affections ; and Roger, be it added, generally found some of the cider from Sir Guy's limited cellar making its way down his thirsty throat. Were it not for this wrangling over the lad, they were the best of friends, and the poor priest often wondered where the fine fish came from for which he was never called upon to pay.

And why had Arnoul been so much away from Woodleigh during his short visit to his brother ? There were many reasons. First, there were the masses at Moreleigh. He had accompanied Sir Guy, not once or twice, but many times, to the chapel that lay within the demesne of the Viponts. Nor had he been at all loth to go. And the reading of the Mass, and the breakfast that followed—for how could Sir Guy get back to Woodleigh on an empty stomach ?—took up a great deal of the morning. And Guy would dawdle so on the road back. He always had so many things to say, and so much advice to give, and he spun out such long stories about all the worthies, as examples for him to follow.

Then there was Totnes ; and, as everyone knows, to go to Totnes and talk with the armourer at the bridge, and try the arms that the Abbot has selected, cannot be undertaken with less than a whole day to do it in.

And last, there was Buckfast. True, Arnoul was staying at Woodleigh with his brother ; but as he was

to meet the Lord Abbot at Exeter, and set out from there, the only chance of saying good-bye to all his friends lay in his taking two days to make a last pilgrimage to Our Lady of Buckfast. And the two days had lengthened into three—there were so many farewells to make. And . . . and altogether poor Roger had been rather overlooked. So he promised him a whole day for himself, a lazy day of fishing and doing nothing at Avon Mouth.

And the day had come and was already nearly gone ; and there they were going back to the mainland from the little island that lends the high distinction of its presence to fidgety, fussy, fuming, little Avon, as it flows down from the lower moorland to meet the sea.

Arnoul first broke the silence. He was looking sideways, away from the land, into the broad red furrow that the setting sun was beginning to plough across the water to the westward, and his bronzed face caught something of its fiery glow.

"Roger," he began slowly, as if choosing his words, "do you know aught of Sigar Vipont?"

The man eyed him curiously, wondering what brought Sir Sigar to his mind. "Ay, that I do," he answered in a tone that bespoke little token of reverence towards the knight of Moreleigh. "I know that he is the worst-tempered man in Devon, and I know it to my cost. So do you, lad. I mind me when you came back, a little lad, crying because that same Sir Sigar clouted you. Years ago, that is ; and you no higher than so." He made a sign with his hand above the bottom of the boat in illustration.

"I mind it well, you and your dog ; and, did I not, 'tis Isobel would not let me forget it. But what of him, lad? Why do you speak of him?"

"Oh, nothing, Roger. Only I have been seeing him of late, when Guy has been going to the castle. And . . . and," he ended weakly, "I think he is very evil-humoured."

"And what has that to do with you?" questioned the man. "All the countryside knows that. 'Tis nothing new for Sigar to show his temper. But," he added with suspicion, "has he been venting his wrath on you?"

"No! no!" replied Arnoul quickly. "Not that, Roger. He has been thoughtful and gracious to both Guy and me of late. Only, when first I saw him—Guy and I had gone over to the castle about the masses, you know—he was in such a rage. And with his daughter, too. I wondered if he were really mad. Is he really mad, Roger?"

"Mad!" echoed the man. "Yes, mad as you are, or I, or my Lord the Abbot up at Buckfast. He is mad when he chooses to be mad, or when he lets himself get out of hand with his anger. I am drunk when I choose—God assoil me!—and when, perchance, too many inns stand gaping alongside a dusty road. And, as I am drunken by choice or by occasion, so is Sigar Vipont mad. But what ails you, to harp so on Vipont and his bad temper?"

"I was thinking of the maid, his daughter," replied Arnoul softly, turning his face still further towards the blood-red track across the water. Perhaps it was the light that crimsoned his face and brow.

"So!" thought Roger to himself. "So!" But he said aloud, "And what of her?"

"She is very beauteous," the boy answered, keeping his eyes fixed upon the sun-stained water.

"So!" commented the fisherman mentally. And

then, "Yes, lad, she is a fair maid and a wealthy. All Moreleigh is hers when Sir Sigar dies."

The lad sighed; and Roger promptly, and perhaps purposely, changed the conversation. "But why talk of Viponts or of maids, on this last day with poor Roger at Avon Mouth? You will be going in a day or so where neither Vipont nor his maid will trouble you. And when you return, you will be too great a man to worry about either—God wot! a bishop at the least, and so full of learning that there will be no understanding you."

Arnoul smiled. He was not sure that Guy had suggested a mitre as his goal, but Roger evidently flew at higher game than the poor priest.

So he began to jest and chaff with the man, and told his plans and hopes over again, as the boat moved slowly through the oily water and at last grated on the shingle of the mainland. They dragged the light craft up beyond reach of tides or storms, near to the little hut where Roger's nets hung out drying. And Arnoul gave the fisherman a hand in taking them down, and storing them away inside the cabin.

Roger announced his intention of accompanying the lad to Woodleigh and making an evening of it. So they went off together through the gathering twilight.

Arrived at the village, Arnoul found Sir Guy waiting impatiently for his return. He was walking to and fro before the house, hands clasped behind back, head bent in thought; and he nodded every now and then to impress on his memory some point of which he had thought for his brother's edification.

The priest had heard from Buckfast that the Abbot was to ride to Exeter on the morrow, and that Arnoul

was to be there to meet him and his train at sundown, or else before sext at the Priory of Torre, where Father Abbot was to lie that night.

There was much to be done, many things to be spoken of before the morning. This sudden move of the Abbot's had shortened Arnoul's time by two or three days at least. And so Roger was sent once more to get what comfort he could at the hands of Isobel, while the two brothers talked again far into the night.

The morn broke glorious, spears of gold and red hurled by the glowing east against the mantling sky. Arnoul was up and seeing to his horse with the first herald of the coming day. All his scanty baggage was prepared, the animal standing ready bridled and saddled, when Sir Guy rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and came out, clad in rusty black, into the sunlight. Isobel was already in the kitchen, bustling about with a great clatter of pots and pans, keeping the tears away by her great preparations for the parting breakfast and making up little packages of food to be stuffed, at the last moment, into saddle bag and bundle. Before long Roger, who had found some lodging for the night—the lee side of a hedge, most like—came up, rough and shaggy, in the bright morning light; and old Isobel stepped to the door to see the preparations for departure. There was little speech, except for Sir Guy's perpetual injunctions and advices, running on like a long litany.

At last all was ready: the breakfast eaten, Arnoul seated on his beast and the last packet stowed away. Sir Guy had given the lad more than half the money he had in the house at the time, and Roger, not to be outdone by Isobel, had pressed upon him, out of his small stock of belongings, a token that he thought the boy would value. What is more, he slipped at the

same time a silver coin into his hand. "'Twill serve to buy you wine upon the road," he whispered. But Arnoul was loth to take it from him; and it was only when he saw how sorely the honest fellow bore his refusal that he dropped it into the pouch at his side. And Roger, who with all his roughness was as delicate as he, laughed and wagged his head as he heard his coin chink against the others in the wallet.

"When you come back with crozier and mitre, I will exact an usury like any Jew," he chuckled.

"And crozier or no crozier, you shall have it," the boy smiled back at his humble friend.

They walked by his side to the end of the village. People came to their doors as they passed, and wished the lad a farewell and a Godspeed. The village dogs barked about the horse's legs, and children ran and toddled beside the priest. One little urchin caught his gown in grimy hands, as if it were poor Sir Guy who was faring forth from Woodleigh to seek his fortune.

And so the little procession went on, priest and dogs, Isobel and Roger, and Arnoul sitting on his horse, and children straggling and tailing out in the rear, until they came to the last house that marked the end of the hamlet.

There they said good-bye—the boy dismounting and kneeling for his brother's blessing. And he rode away from the village, looking back over his shoulder at the little group standing together in the golden morning, until a bend in the road hid them from his sight. He rode away, as he had walked out from the aluminate, under the great gateway of St Mary's, with a sadness at his heart struggling with an inexpressible and expanding joy.

The promise of the morning did not hold. As he

rode, the weather changed. Thick clouds banked themselves up behind him, and stole across the blue sky, floating out, white and fleecy at first, like islands of snow in a topaz sea ; and then gathering and massing and folding themselves one above the other, so it seemed, in sullen, cheerless tones of grey. Here and there the sun struck feebly through the jagged rents in the lower cloud pall, the light struggling towards the earth in long, fan-shaped rays that filtered through the murky air. The ragged edges of the rifts were of a weak, sickly yellow, merging into a faint green where the sky was bared. The trees on either hand and the sloping hills stood out strangely, vividly green in the yellow glare that suffused the atmosphere. He urged his horse onward, fearful of the storm breaking before he should make shelter, and found himself in Totnes as the first drops began to fall. There he waited, sitting in the armourer's by the bridge, and wondering whether he should meet Abbot Benet, as had been arranged, at Torre.

The storm was short, and spent itself almost before it had begun ; so he thanked the armourer, and rode on over the bridge and up the long hill on the other side. The grasses and the leaves sparkled fresh and green with the rain, as he jogged along over the rolling hills that lie between the ancient town nestling in its emerald solitude and the Premonstratensian house of Torre. He came within sight of the sea more than once, and passed groups of peasants now and then, a pair of begging friars in their sad-coloured habits, and once a gaily dressed company of knights and squires, making their way, with laughter and jest, towards the castle of the Pomeroyes. At length he drew within sight of his destination and, putting

spurs to his horse, rode up into the courtyard of the monastery.

There he found all bustle and animation. The Abbot's train was already making ready to start. The mules were standing ready saddled—six of them in all—as well as several of the little, shaggy moor ponies. For the Lord Abbot was going abroad accompanied not only by his advisor, but by three of the brethren who were to finish their studies in Paris. The Premonstratensian Prior, their host, was to ride with them as far as the episcopal city. The ponies were for the lay servants.

Arnoul was too excited to take much note of what was going on, but his ride had made him thirsty. So he sought out the cellarer first of all and then made his way to the Abbot, who was standing, ready to mount, beside the black-robed Prior.

"Pray, Father, a blessing!" he said, habituated to the monastic usage; and he made his reverence. "Here I am at last, though methought it would be at Exeter I should find you."

The Abbot and the Prior both welcomed him heartily. "You have ridden far," said the former, looking at the lad's horse. "Shall we change your beast here, or can it take you on to Exeter, think you?"

"I have not ridden five leagues, and I rested at the bridge," answered the boy. "Besides, from here to Exeter is but another five leagues and something over, and we shall but walk the whole way."

He smiled as his glance fell on the fat mule soberly caparisoned for the monk, for he knew how fast that excellent animal was likely to go.

"So be it, then," said Abbot Benet, climbing into his saddle, and tucking his scapular and the skirts of his

habit out of the way of his legs. "We are ready. Mount!"

The monks and the Prior got clumsily astride their mules. The men mounted upon their ponies—Arnoul vaulting lightly upon his—and the whole party filed out of the gate on their way to Exeter—and Paris.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIFE OF THE FRANKS

“BOOM!”

In the far distance a deep-toned bell rang out through the keen autumn air, striking upon the ears of a little band of travellers.

“Boom!”

It was the great tenor of Notre Dame that echoed and reverberated in the still afternoon, the long, brazen note poured forth from the quivering metal dying in melancholy cadences over the low, marshy land that sloped towards the river.

“Boom! Boom! Boom!”

Every instant the pulsing sound grew closer and more insistent as the journeyers made their way towards the ramparts that Philip Augustus, King of the Franks, had raised about the heart of his capital.

They were riding through the green fields now—fields interspersed with the houses that peeped through the circling trees; fields radiating from the tower-broken circuit of the enclosing wall; fields eloquent, in their green cultivation and care, of the near presence of a place where men toiled and laboured, city-wise, without thought of that grateful nature about them that made it possible for them to live at all.

The Abbot was deep in thought. At his side rode his counsellor, silent too, as was fitting, since his superior did not address him. Riding behind were the two monks destined for the Paris schools, and Arnoul.

Their journey, as far as he at any rate was concerned, was drawing to an end. His goal was almost within sight. In an hour he would find himself within the walls of Paris, across the Seine, on the other side of the towering, soaring mass of the cathedral that sent its full-throated, brazen voice thundering and pulsing and booming across the closely packed roofs of the town, and out over the green sea of fields encircling it. He was all excitement and animation as he drew his steed up to the Abbot's side.

"Your blessing, Father!"

"*Benedicite*," replied Abbot Benet abstractedly, scarce noting that he was opening the floodgates of questioning to an eager boy. The consulter pricked up his ears. He was wearying of the long silence.

"Father Abbot," began the lad, "are those the bells of Paris that we hear? And what is that—and that—and that?"

He pointed to right and left of the straight road at buildings peeping through the trees. Here the spire of a church or monastic establishment lifted itself above the clustering dwellings that nestled around its base. There a vast mass of solid masonry rose, solitary and forbidding in its conscious strength, battlement and tower and bastion, keep and frowning gateway, wall and moat complete, out of the green plain.

The Abbot looked up from the roadway, upon which he had for some time been gazing in moody abstraction, and took a sweeping glance round. He drew a long breath of satisfaction as he perceived that they were at length nearing the city from which he would turn his steps again towards the great mother house at Citeaux, beloved by all the members of the Cistercian Order. For the sons of St Bernard were always more happy

in their monastery homes than abroad, and Citeaux was their home above all others. His eyes fell first upon St Lazare and the Chapel of St Laurent, lying in their isolation before them towards the right of the route they were following. "There," he said, indicating with his hand the group of buildings lying in the boskage on the left, "are St Lazare and St Laurent. We shall soon sight the Temple. Look for the towers over yonder!" With his left hand he pointed towards the south, where the towers and frowning walls of the military brotherhood began to rise stolidly from the sea of green. They passed close to the two churches, keeping to the left of the wall along which the high-road ran, and came to the fork where it splits into two, and then three, north of the Abbey of St Martin. There was no mistaking St Martin's. It stood high up upon a swelling eminence looking down upon the fertile fields and the limpid streams that watered them. There were gnarled oak-trees straggling up the side of the hill that it crowned, and the great sails of windmills turned ceaselessly beside its cloistered enclosure.

The party followed the westernmost road, leaving the frowning Temple with its grey masses of hewn stone well upon the left. Before long they found themselves at Bourg l'Abbé, and drawing within actual sight of the encircling wall of the town.

All along the way the Abbot pointed out to the lad the houses and the smiling fields that he knew, naming the branching roads and the bourgs and religious houses or civil establishments to which they led. Behind them, miles to the right, lay the Convent of the Filles Dieu, beside the little stream that ran through the valley; and before them were the clusters of houses that had broken through the bounds of the wall and already pushed and

jostled each other out into the fields. Then there was the wall itself, through a gateway in which they entered the jumble of dwellings. It was massively built, this wall, with its moat or fosse at the base, of squared and dressed blocks of stone ; and it had moreover been built double, the interval between the two faces being filled with rubble and cement, which bound it all together into one solid block of concrete. At regular intervals between the gates, towers and projecting buttresses were set, that frowned down upon the fields without and, like a line of sentinels posted round the town, gave a sense of security to the burghers within. When they passed through this stone cincture of forts and buttresses and towers, there was St Magloire, again on the left hand, regnant in its crowd of emulous suitors, and the older wall, of which little now remained, that had restrained the advances of the former town.

The Abbot again stretched out his hand to the right, pointing out a cluster of towers and turrets soaring, one against the other, into the sky. "That," he said, "is the Louvre ; and nearer, the tower you can just see is that of St Germain l'Auxerrois.

"But look !" he continued. "There are the twin towers of Notre Dame ; and we are almost come to the Pont au Change. There it is ! The Grand Châtelet guarding the riverside and the rights and privileges of the town !"

They passed slowly through the crowded streets, under the beetling fronts of the houses that seemed to fall towards each other on either side and become closer and thicker as they proceeded. Houses jammed and wedged together in prolific confusion ; houses of plaster or gypsum, with great, projecting, carved beams of wood ; houses of three and of four storeys, mounting and

climbing, with every variety of angle and individual architecture, above the paved streets that Philip Augustus in his wisdom had seen fit to provide for the burghers of Paris. There were houses, substantial and proud, wedged in between narrow buildings, upstart and arrogant; houses of dressed stone that jogged elbows with plebeian structures of lesser pretensions and greater ornament. Dark ends of beams, carved and chiselled, projected above the roadway; and from the overhanging windows and in the narrow, crowded streets, the vast collection of the people stood and gazed or moved and circulated, without concern for the Lord Abbot of Buckfast and his little train.

From the encircling wall inward, the houses ever thickened and pressed upon each other, growing higher and lifting their pointed roofs farther up towards the sky as their ground space became more meagre and their jostling together more pronounced. It was a maze of irregular, narrow streets, crossing and intersecting each other at all angles, but cut sheer through by the straight road which our travellers were following. This led, with hardly an angle or a bend, from the chapel of St Laurent to the Grand Châtelet, standing guard over the approaches to the city proper. Here were the dwelling-houses of the merchants and burghers of Paris, their shops and stores, their offices and public buildings, their chapels and hospitals and churches, running together in picturesque confusion, like the masses of colour upon a painter's palette. To the north and east—within the wall that stretched in an irregularly drawn semicircle from the Tour de Billi, on the one hand, to the Louvre, upon the other—the cultivated fields that had been enclosed within the precincts of the town were fast being encroached upon by new

buildings similar to those that had already burst out into the surrounding country beyond St Magloire. From the ten openings in the ramparts high-roads that began somewhere near the Grand Châtelet radiated east, west and northwards—running out like the tentacles of some monstrous creature, dividing, crossing and coming together again. Scattered houses, abbeys, and farms along their length here and there grouped themselves together in little clusters and villages. To the east there was the Bourg St Eloy with its Culture, closer to the wall than Rully and St Antoine des Champs. Ville l'Évêque lay on the west, straggling out along the intersecting roads that met just above the westernmost extremity of the gardens of the Louvre. Between these two points the solitary Grange Batelier, the Monastère des Filles, St Lazare, St Nicholas in the fields, King Robert's Palace, the Temple—to go from west to east—were the outposts of the seething life gathered together and pent up within the wall towards which all these roads converged. And to the south lay the Seine, cutting across from east to west like a bar of silver, forming the natural protection of the town. Five islands lay upon its bosom—three within the walls, two without, near the Tour de Billi. As it was the southernmost boundary of the Town, so it was the northernmost of the University, which stretched away in its turn, with its wall and gates and excrescences and roads, into the country towards the south.

But it is time to get back to the travellers whom we left standing before the frowning arch of the Grand Châtelet that guards the bridge joining Town and City. Arnoul, making good use of his licence, was pouring out question after question. His eyes sparkled. He was excited and animated. The crowded streets, full of people

hurrying hither and thither, fascinated him; the strange medley of nationalities, the strange dresses, the bustle and movement of the great town. There were merchants of all kinds of merchandise at their shop fronts; and merchants crying their wares up and down the streets—sellers of cutlery and vegetables, silks and velvets and fish. There were the makers of headgear, with their bonnets and aumusses and coifs, felt hats round and low, with their brims turned up, or high in the crown and boasting of no brims at all. There were the bakers disposing of their wheaten bread, their bread of rye and oats, of barley and even of bran; and there were butchers with their joints and pieces of flesh—for they did not sell by weight in those days—beef and mutton and pork. There were purse-makers with wallets and leather breeches exposed for sale, leather and horsehide and pigskin; and the manufacturers of dice of every conceivable material, ivory, metal, leather and wood. And there were taverns, taverns everywhere, among all this medley of shops and merchandise; taverns where wine was sold “by the plate”—since only those who ate could drink—and taverns where it was sold “by the jug” so that the buyer could carry it away. Apothecaries, in whose dark shops that sovereign remedy for all the ills of man, the golden water that we now call brandy, could be found—known to Albert the Great himself; grocer-apothecaries and vinegar-makers, and Jews hawking their wares from the six streets of Jewry up by the Halles all through the city and even over the two bridges to the University on the other side of the river. Jews and Christians, Frenchmen and Italians and Germans, Arabians and Spanish Arabs, too, with their serious faces and pensive eyes, their great tomes and commentaries under their arms. But these

were for the most part on the other side of the river, where the University was, where the parchment-sellers and straw merchants sold their bundles of straw to the students and scholars to sit on, and where the book-vendors plied a lively trade. Masters of their crafts, with their one or two apprentice—the cloth-weavers and the cutlers; the silk-spinners, whose widows could take their places in the guild when they died; the fish-merchants, the hereditary butchers, and the carpenters, who built houses and boats and carriages, as well as made tables and benches—they were all there, together with a goodly sprinkling of clerks and canons, monks and scholars, friars and the riff-raff of the populace at large. Above the rush and roar of the crowd, piercing high and shrill above the cries of the vendors and the tread of feet upon the narrow, stone-paved streets, rose the voice of a woman, old and puckered and drawn, stooping under a load of cast-off clothes and rags: "*Cote et sorcot rafeteroie! Cote et sorcot rafeteroie!*"—Coats and overcoats to mend!—periodic, insistent, harsh, metallic. It was like the menace of an impersonal fate hovering over the tangle of human lives and the huckstering barter and banter of the merchant crowd. Querulous, piercing, regular, reiterative, like a creaking gate or a bough grinding in a wind, it rose and fell. Menacing, cringing, monotonous, the voice rang forth—"Coats and surcoats to mend! Rents and tears and rags! Frayed cloth and stained! Tatters and shreds! They all come to that at last! Clothes and merchants, monks and courtiers, scholars and teachers, bishops and kings! Wear and tear, and rags and rents! Coats and surcoats to mend! To mend!" The voice passed on slowly, losing itself in the general hum, and the decrepit form, bent under the bundle of rags and tatters,

tottered round a corner on its way to the six streets of Jewry.

Through it all Arnoul, drinking in the unfamiliar details of the scene, kept up his battery of questions. Who was this? and what was that? and where were the schools of the cathedral? The little group was still—they had been standing there perhaps five minutes in all—before the Châtelet, the Abbot doing his best to keep pace with the lad's changing play of questions, and giving him all the information he could. When he asked of Notre Dame, the good monk turned and, passing through the arches of the Châtelet, led the way across the stone bridge, between the rows of goldsmiths' and moneychangers' shops that lined it and gained for it the name of Pont au Change. Passing by the parish church of St Barthelemi and the Priory of St Eloy, and skirting the public square that opened before the palace, they turned sharply towards the left and found themselves in front of that great pile of masonry that comprised Notre Dame itself and the Évêché, St Denis du Pas, the School of Theology, and the Hôtel Dieu.

"There is the cathedral," said the Abbot, pointing with his hand and naming one after another the buildings that rose before them. "We are in the City now: for you must know, Arnoul, that the City and the Island are the same thing. We entered the City when we crossed the stone bridge where the goldsmiths were. But you will see Notre Dame again, lad. Turn to the right hand here. So! We must cross yonder wooden structure. That is the bridge joining the City to the University. See! There is the little Châtelet; and yonder the great high-road that leads straight from the bridge-head to the Papal Gate in the southern wall."

They crossed the second bridge.

"Now," continued the Abbot, "you are in the University. There, on the right, is St Severin; and before you lies the Hospital of the Almoners of St Benet. And there, on the left, is St Julien le Pauvre and St John Lateran—named after the mother and mistress of all the churches, the cathedral at Rome. You cannot see many of the buildings from here, but you will soon have time to explore them all for yourself. And down near the gate, to your left, is the Abbey and School of Ste Geneviève, the rival of Notre Dame itself." He continued speaking and replying to the lad's questioning. But the questions grew rarer and shorter, as Arnoul felt himself at length within the University proper, and at last he was silent altogether. It was all new and strange, but he was there at last. Perhaps his excitement in town and city had left him a little stale and flat.

But he was still gazing about him, if he was not plying the Abbot with questions and thinking hard. The University presented an aspect that differed in many respects from both City and Town. There were colleges here, rather than shops, religious establishments in place of parish churches. And the crowd—for it was no less crowded than on the northern bank of the river—was not the same. There were fewer merchants, and those of several definite and limited classes; parchment-sellers and strawmongers, with a bookshop here and there; and, as he discovered later, in the Rue St Victor there was the only place where one could purchase ink in all Paris. That was the shop of Asceline de Roye.

Here the principal wares were of such a kind and nature as to betoken the presence of a place of learning, rather than an ordinary town, and the sort of customers one would expect to find there.

And the clerks! There was a representation, it seemed, from every nation under heaven. Most of them were young men—youth, in fact, predominating in the narrow streets; youth buoyant, studious, careless, sober, rollicking, staid; youth well cared for and well to do, in foppish silks and furs; and youth poor and out at elbows, sallow-faced and pinched with overmuch study and want. One conceited young fellow was mincing up the street, with a self-satisfied smirk, to the class of the particular master he patronised. His servant walked before him carrying several huge volumes bound in leather dyed a vivid red. No doubt of it, he fancied himself immensely and considered himself the most profound philosopher in the whole University. And, on the other side of the street a bent and sallow man, verging on forty years of age, crept round a corner, ragged and threadbare, and hurried off in the opposite direction to the school at which he slaved and studied, sitting on the straw, and drinking in, open-eyed and open-mouthed, the learning that he sat up all the night to master. Arnoul noted the hungry look in his eyes, as he crept hurriedly down the street. He stuck close to the walls of the houses and flitted past like a shadow. There was hunger for knowledge speaking from those sad, deep eyes; and hunger for bread spoke eloquent in his emaciated cheeks.

Then, as they passed on one side to avoid a collision with a band of downcast-eyed friars, they almost ran into the midst of a crowd of a very different type. A tavern door gaped and, like a great mouth, sent forth a torrent of ribald song and drunken clamour, as a handful of scholars reeled over the threshold into the street. Arnoul caught a glimpse of the interior and a whiff of the reek that streamed through the opening. There

were still students within, drinking. It was a low sort of place, and the frequenters looked poor. But the drink had made them forget their poverty and become quarrelsome or amorous. What looked like valets or servants, better clad than they, were in the tavern too; and women, flushed and heated with wine, talked loudly and sang, or shouted tags of scurrilous verse, outdoing even the men in their shamelessness and clamour. One man lay stretched on the floor in sodden unconsciousness—the butt of lewd jest. A woman was kicking at him with her foot, but he did not stir. It was a disgusting sight, and Arnoul, who had seen drunkenness and coarseness before, drew back from this with a shiver.

They avoided the reeling and stumbling rabble, and passed on. The scholars had by this time come to blows among themselves, where they were not occupied in mocking and shrieking vile epithets after the religious. A functionary of the University, gorgeous in his robes of office, came into sight, making his way through the press at the heels of his beadle; and then two or three black-robed monks and canons.

The whole scene was perpetually shifting and changing, the human figures—black, and red, and white, and grey, and green—weaving themselves in and out like the warp and woof of some strange tapestry. It was the tapestry of life, thought Arnoul, vivid and brilliant and sparkling. This was the University! A web of human lives woven together into one great and mysterious picture! And the cry of the old woman, bending under her burden of rags in the Town came back to him: "*Cote et sorcot rafeteroie!* Coats to mend! Rents and rags!" Here was the tapestry of life. It would wear and fray and tear! Already the fringes were ragged!

And it wove and wove, and ravelled and unravelled, before his eyes. And he was one of those moving figures now. And. . . .

The Abbot's voice broke upon the train of his meditations. "Wake up, Arnoul. Here we are at last! Your voyage, at any rate, is done!" They turned a corner into a quiet street, a backwater off the main stream, and found themselves at their destination.

CHAPTER X

GLIMPSES OF HERESY

WHEN Abbot Benet had left Paris for Citeaux, in company with many other Cistercian prelates going to the chapter from the north of France, it was not many days before Arnoul was quite at home in his new surroundings. The two young monks, his companions, had settled down quietly in the cloister to a life differing in nothing, save in the hours of class and study, from that of their Devon home. But he found all things very different. The Abbot had taken him to the Abbey of St Victor and placed him under the care of the canons who were so famous for their generous hospitality towards students from the provinces and abroad. Here, while he did not follow the strict rule of the religious, he was obliged to some extent to follow a regular life of study and routine. He found himself in the company of scholars rich and poor, gathered together from all directions, and all impelled by the same desire for knowledge that animated him.

The first morning, after Mass and school, he chose his friends. The students were walking to and fro in the Abbey gardens, discussing the lesson that they had just heard, arguing and disputing as students will; and he was walking with them, not daring to lift his voice or join in the discussion for fear of betraying his ignorance. One handsome young fellow, three or four years his senior, was arguing in a loud tone of voice. He was evidently a favourite, for he had quite a little group

of the scholars listening to him. His voice, despite its loudness, was melodious, and his speech of a strong southern accent. This, together with his curling hair and dark complexion, proclaimed him what he was—a student from the north of Italy or else from the south-eastern corner of France.

Arnoul liked his face, though perhaps the lips were a trifle full and the eyes too close set, while his voice was liquid and flowing.

“And Maitre Jehan remembers,” he was saying, “how that same Maitre Amaury was adjudged guilty of heresy after he had lain buried for full four years. The synod decreed that he should be dug up again and buried in unconsecrated ground. Nor is that all. Maitre Jehan remembers seeing ten of his disciples burned at the stake, because they refused to recant and deny their teaching; and a great number were imprisoned for life as an example for the rest. Now I find,” he went on, frowning judicially, “that our good Giles holds those same doctrines; and, of a certainty, he ought to recant or taste the fire.”

“Nay, my good Maitre Louis”—it must have been Giles who spoke—“I never said that all was one; nor would I hold that God and His creatures were the same and identical. What I maintained was that all things are in Him.”

“Oh! Oh!” broke in the group in chorus. “And what did Amaury make of that?”

They continued disputing and bantering, walking up and down the garden paths, until Louis the Gascon tired of his dialectical fencing. Catching sight of Arnoul, who already looked upon him as a being altogether superior, he beckoned him to his side.

“And who are you?” he asked. “A new-comer,

evidently, and, by your dress and colour, an Englishman. Do you belong to the English Nation? Are you inscribed? Have you made the acquaintance of the Dean of the English?"

He poured out a string of questions of which Arnoul only succeeded in answering two.

He was certainly an Englishman; and he had done nothing as yet, since he had only that morning come to St Victor's. Louis the Gascon immediately took him under his own especial protection and patronage.

"I shall take you to the Dean myself, and you shall be inscribed at once. Moreover, I must show you our beautiful City. It is the most beautiful and wonderful in the world. I have been here for the past four years, and there is very little of Paris I do not know. I shall show you all there is to see." The group surrounding him nodded in confirmation of what he said. They were admirers of Maitre Louis, even in his conceit. Only, Maitre Giles pursed his lips together and shook his head when no one was looking. Maitre Louis might be brilliant in logic and know his didaskalia, but he, Giles, knew of another side to his character, that did not come out in the class-rooms. It might have been pique, it might be jealousy, but there was a frowning look in the eyes of Maitre Giles as the Gascon spoke of his four years' acquaintance with Paris. Maitre Louis, however, had forgotten Giles and Amaury of Bena altogether, and continued his self-imposed task of imparting information to his newly found Englishman.

"You are a clerk, remember, and enjoy the benefit of clergy. Thank God the King handed us over to the Church courts! We are all Maitres and not Messires on this side of Seine! The civil power has no hold on us. Yes; you are certainly a clerk and

enjoy benefit. Hola, you fellows! I shall not dispute any more. I have a novice to instruct in the manners and customs of our University."

He moved off with Arnoul along one of the quieter paths of the gardens. He was certainly a very fine fellow, thought the boy, as he replied to questions of England, of himself, his parentage and achievements, and listened to an account of Gascony and the family and doings of Maitre Louis—a very fine fellow indeed and one that he ought to be proud to have as a friend and mentor! He was handsome and debonair, quick of mind and of a ready tongue. Who better could he have to introduce him to the life and studies of Paris?

They arranged to go together to the Dean of the English Nation that afternoon after the school of Decretals; and Maitre Louis had added one more to his circle of admirers, and found a ready hero-worshipper in Arnoul before they entered the Abbey again for the midday meal.

And be it said to the credit or discredit of the Gascon, that he was always ready to put himself out for a new-comer, provided he saw any chance of adding him to his own little group. Admiration and praise were as the breath of life to him, and whatever there was in his character that could claim neither he kept carefully in the background. He was, in truth, for all his physical beauty and keen wit, a weak man; but he took pains to cover his weakness with a show of learning and an imperturbable calmness of feature. While Arnoul, for all the tissue of factors that were woven into his boyishness and showed, many-hued and complex, on the surface, was at heart perfectly simple, the apparently guileless Louis was in reality both crafty and subtle. But then he was careful to show nothing but the best,

and no one would have dreamed for an instant that, under his charming smile and brilliant speech, there was anything but singleness of intention. Probably he himself did not realise that there was.

The two young fellows were a contrast physically as well as morally. Of the two Arnoul stood some inches the taller, but Maitre Louis was the stouter. The Englishman was sun-browned and open; the Gascon's natural swarthiness was toned down and paled somewhat by his studies and his city life—his features insensibly moulding to a student type. Both were young and handsome, as fine a pair as you could find in all the University, brimming over with life, bent upon getting on, two magnificent young animals, clean-cut and as well set up as race horses.

Decretals over, they set out, passing into the University through the Porte St Victor, and leaving Place M'Albert upon their right as they bent their way towards the lodging of the elected Dean of the English.

Their conversation ranged through all the subjects that would be of interest to a newly come member of the schools.

"Can you tell me," Arnoul was saying, "why there were so many more scholars at this afternoon's lecture than in the morning? I suppose that there must be more chance of getting on in law than in science or theology. But the hall was quite full this afternoon. There must have been twice as many there. If that is the branch of study that offers most chance of advancement, I suppose I must go in for it. My brother would have me do my best, and I'm sure I want to get on just as much as he wants me to."

Maitre Louis began to laugh—a dry, expressionless laugh that neither increased nor diminished his habitual

smile. "It's well you have fallen into my hands," he answered. "You might have acted on the strength of your observation and tied yourself at the beginning to a mouldy and stupid career. 'Most of the scholars come to the Decretals class. Therefore the law offers the best chance of success,' you argue. That shows you are new to the game. You have an enthymeme that carries no weight. Now I can tell you—but then I know the University by experience—that the real reason is this. The Decretals are in the afternoon. The scholars love to be abed of a morning. Ergo Or I can cast it for you into one of the approved syllogisms, if you will.

"But wait a moment! Look at yonder modest building rising in the Coupegueule. And, by the Holy Mass it is a street of cut-throats! That is the new college founded by the King's confessor, Maitre Robert of Sorbon. The house and stable were given him by Louis himself. Cardinal Geoffrey de Bar, the Dean of Paris and the Archdeacon of Rheims gave him money. And he's got Lawrence the Englishman—your compatriot, by the way—and Godfrey des Fontaines, and, above all, the great William of St Amour himself, to help him. If I make no mistake—and I'm not likely to, since I'm so long in the University—that college is going to outrival all the schools. The Queen's physician is interested in it, and King Louis is doing his best to make it prosper.

"But you were talking of the Decretists. Now if I were you—if you will take the advice of a friend—I should advise you to go in for logic and natural philosophy. That's the real thing that pays nowadays! There's that absurd young friar, now, just begun to teach at St Jacques'. He made his studies here

a few years ago. He is all for Aristotle and logic! Why! Albert himself, his own master, is almost forgotten, and he's only been here a few months! William hates him. He hates them both—this Dominican upstart, and Brother Bonaventure over at the Cordeliers'. But you could never take the Franciscan's line. It is all mystical and speculative; whereas Thomas is practical. You don't want to make his mistake—you must stand by the seculars since you are a secular yourself—but you can't be wrong in learning logic, and getting all the practice at dialectic you can. Look at me, now"—and for the first time Arnoul noticed a smirk of conscious pride on the Gascon's visage—"I am a rationalist, and just see how it has advanced me and gained me friends!"

"Who are these men you speak of?" asked his companion. "Who is this upstart Thomas, and the Franciscan friar Bonaventure? And who is this William who so hates them both?"

"You must know," explained Maitre Louis, "that here in Paris there are three kinds of scholars. There are the monks and friars, first of all, who profess poverty and walk about with bare feet and beg. They wish to be thought great saints. One of these days you may hear the poet Rutebœuf, or even St Amour, expound what their humility and poverty really mean. Then there are the students who live in religious houses, like you and me with the canons at St Victor's. And lastly, there are those who live in lodgings. They are fine fellows! One of these days I shall live in lodgings myself! They do just as they please, are their own masters, and are quite uninfluenced by the prejudice of an Alma Mater. They choose their own professors and arrange their own classes. They follow no rule, for

they are free men ; and, generally speaking, they really represent the University."

"But Abbot Benet told me . . ." began the lad.

His companion broke in upon him. "I know what you are going to say. Abbot Benet is a Cistercian monk, and does not understand the life of a University. You are quite old enough and quite wise enough to judge for yourself. Wait till you have heard the greatest doctor in Paris! Wait until you have seen William of St Amour! You are a sensible fellow. I saw that at once, or I should not have taken you up and offered to show you Paris. You are an Englishman. I am a Gascon. We do not even belong to the same Nation. But I saw that you were a brave chap, with a good spirit of your own. You must not tie yourself to the Abbot's word in everything. You must judge for yourself."

Arnoul said nothing. This was a new doctrine, but the glaring flattery was subtle for him, and he rather liked it. It seemed a great thing to be able to dispense with the advice he had always had, and to act for himself—freely and without influence. But there was a suggestion of insubordination in it that he shied at ; so he turned the conversation into a new channel with his next question.

"What shall I do when we see the Dean?" he asked. "And what does it mean to be enrolled a member of one of the Nations?"

"It means," answered his instructor, "that you take the place assigned to you in the ranks of your Nation. The English Nation comprises the Germans, as well as scholars from Hungary, Scandinavia and Poland. You will have your Dean to take your part, if you get into trouble, and your own attorney to defend you.

Besides, you will have a legal place in the University ; and that's a great thing. You must be very civil to the Dean when you see him, and answer all his questions. He is an Englishman himself—that is to say he is really a German, but it's all the same thing—and of course he will do his best to make you feel quite at home. There is a small fee to pay for enrolment. You will give him a little more for himself, to get a good place. He has a certain discretion. . . . But you need fear nothing. I know him personally ; and, even if I am a Gascon, I will speak to him for you."

They continued conversing and making their way towards the Chapel of St Andeol, near to which the Dean had his lodging, passing between the parish church of St Cosmas and the Hôtel de Clugny. There was always the same throng of people crowding the streets, and Maitre Louis apparently knew many of them, for he continually nodded and smiled and bowed, and sometimes even interrupted his speech with Arnoul to exchange a word or so with some passing student or layman. Once he left Arnoul's side, near St Andeol, and kept him waiting while he conversed with a Jew. Arnoul knew that he was a Jew not only by his strongly marked features, but by his garments as well ; for he wore the usual fringes at the four corners of his dress. Had the lad heard what passed between them, he might not have been so enthusiastic over his new friend. But he did not hear ; and when Maitre Louis rejoined him, saying, "Old Ben Israel has a pretty daughter, and sells valuable parchments," he lost the first part of the apology in his interest in the second. At length they reached the Dean's. He was in, and Arnoul was properly inscribed as a student of Paris living at St Victor's, and a member of the English

Nation. The Dean spoke with him at some length of himself and England and expatiated upon the significance of his membership in the corps. He was a pompous man and heavy in his conversation, speaking his Latin with a guttural accent and in measured words. But he took the offering Arnoul laid upon the table and carefully stowed it away in the purse hanging by a double thong from his cincture. He bowed the two out at the head of the stairs. The interview was over.

"I think we may have a cup of wine now," said Maitre Louis as they regained the street, and Arnoul, nothing loth, assented. "The Dean might have offered us some refreshment," he grumbled; "especially as you gave him so good a fee. But you can get nothing from some people. Here is a good wine-house I know. It will do at a pinch, at any rate."

They entered the public room and drank wine to the success of the newly enrolled Englishman. Maitre Louis—he seemed to have friends everywhere—knew half the people in the tavern, and introduced his protégé to them. They were jolly fellows, most of them clerks, and evidently hail fellow with his companion, whom they accosted heartily. They were speaking of the friction between the regulars and the seculars—a topic of which Arnoul knew little; but he liked to listen to them and their brilliant and caustic clash of words. One or two were Englishmen like himself, and, leaving the others, they came over to him and spoke of England and London and King Henry, who was then over in Gascony.

By the time he had drunk his wine and paid for both himself and Maitre Louis, he was on good terms with the company; and they voted him a good recruit and prophesied great things for him.

On the way back to St Victor's he could get his companion to talk of little but St Amour. It seemed that the dispute was fast rising to an acute crisis between the astonishingly brilliant, if self-constituted, representatives of the secular professors in the University and the friars they so hated and condemned. Louis was full of it. What he had just heard he retailed, with considerable embellishment, to Arnoul, pouring into his ears an unstinted panegyric of St Amour, and running the regulars down on every count. St Amour, without doubt, must be a wonderful personage, if all Maitre Louis said of him was true; and the friars were obviously a disagreeable and meddling crowd. He would take his stand with Maitre Louis and the great William. He would study dialectic. He would throw in his lot with the stronger party and thus make a name for himself. And how could he do it better than under the tutelage of Maitre Louis? It was settled in his mind—at the end of his first day at the University. No decretals, but logic, science and dialectic! And he would certainly sit under the chair of St Amour. He thought of the Abbot on his way to the chapter at Citeaux. He thought of his brother, in his priest's uneventful little Devon parish. He thought of Vipont and Sibilla, and his hand went mechanically to his throat and travelled down to the reliquary hidden in his bosom.

But he said nothing of what was passing in his mind. Only, from time to time, he asked questions of his companion as they returned to St Victor's by the cloister of the Carmelites and the old Palace of Clovis.

And, in the answers, he learned much of the new life he was to lead, much of Maitre William, much of the long-standing conflict between the two contending

schools. He did not recognise it as yet as it came home to him later on, that those same two parties struggling in the University for mastery, were as old as human nature itself. How could he see in Plato and Aristotle the two drifts of human intelligence and piece them on, through the fathers and the old monks, to the two currents flowing strong in Paris, and carrying the minds of men away with them in their flow? He only heard the two sides roughly delineated by a partisan; and, boylike, he ranged himself with the one.

When the two scholars reached St Victor's, he was, without knowing it, already more than half a disciple of St Amour, and had drunk in, in the poison of Maitre Louis' words, an unreasoning dislike of the mendicants.

CHAPTER XI

FRIENDS AT JULIEN'S TAVERN

ARNOUL kept fairly steadily to the course of studies mapped out for him, working less at the legal classes than at those in which individual wit and brilliance told. While he heard much on all hands of the extraordinary ability of Maitre William, as he got day by day more in touch with the current life of the University, he kept more or less to the classes at St Victor's with, occasionally, a lecture at Notre Dame or one of the other already noted schools.

His curiosity took him to the Sorbonne and Ste Geneviève and even to St Jacques and the Cordeliers'. At St Jacques he had heard Master Elias Brunetus, and John of Rochelle at the Franciscans. And he had seen both John Fidanza, better known as Brother Bonaventure, and Thomas the Neapolitan, who had come to Paris with a brilliant reputation already gained at Cologne. Of the two, he certainly preferred the Dominican brother. A certain class prejudice was in his favour. He was at least a gentleman born, even if he did hold such curious views with regard to the seculars. And what he said seemed to have some sense in it. At any rate the sentences that came so slowly from his lips were trenchant; and his dialectic, though far more heavy, was also far more brilliant than that of Maitre Louis. He was lecturing on a very dry and uninteresting subject, so Arnoul thought; and he could not understand how it was that he had such a large

following of scholars filling up his lecture hall. He did not go a second time. His prejudice in favour of the secular party increased rather than diminished ; for he was getting hand and glove with the little faction among the scholars at St Victor's that acknowledged Maitre Louis as its leader and the exponent of its principles. The University, he discovered, was just then split up into a great number of these little factions. There were few of the colleges that had not taken up their stand on the one side or the other of the burning controversy ; and the students outside the colleges, though more than likely they hardly realised the issue at stake, were as venomous and bitter as partisans could well be. For the most part, and with few exceptions, they were on the secular side ; and as there were practically no influences to restrain them, they did not stop short at words or arguments, but used their fists and weapons as well.

He was coming back one day along the Rue St Jacques from the Petit Pont, with Maitre Louis and another of his friends, when they heard a great commotion going on behind St Julien's Church. Gripping their sticks, they rushed round the corner. It was a pair of begging friars—or rather, had been ; for one had taken to his heels and was making off as fast as his legs could carry him through the crooked streets. A crowd of men and boys stood round the remaining friar, some of them drunk, some sober, but all abusive and threatening. The poor man was shaking in his shoes and had changed his cry for alms into a prayer for mercy. " Good gentlemen all," he quavered, " have pity on a poor friar ! I have done naught to anger you. I am but a poor brother of the Preachers crying alms. Ow ! " he cried, as the first cudgel caught him on the arm from

which his alms basket hung. "Ow! For the love of God! Holy Virgin, protect me! Ow! Good masters, spare me! Ow!" He danced about, trying to avoid the cudgels aimed at him, for the crowd had quite lost its reason by now. They looked upon the unfortunate friar as the embodiment of the Dominican Order, and remembered in a muddled way what they were pleased to consider their wrongs, their grievances against it. There was no responsible member of the University within sight, and a sheer lust of tormenting had seized upon the scholars. Those who had been drinking lurched about, striking at the friar, but as often as not contriving to fetch a ringing blow on the head of one of their companions. It threatened to become a general *mêlée*. A woman—there were several slatternly women standing on the fringe of the crowd, out of harm's way—shrieked out vile abuse and urged the students on. At length—for the scrimmage had taken an ugly look, and knives were drawn—one of the least drunken of the lot rushed forward and seized the friar's basket. He was a big, burly fellow from Scandinavia. Arnoul had had him pointed out to him as one of the strongest men in the English Nation. Reckless of the blows that would have cracked a less thick skull, he forced the shaven head with a crash of breaking twigs through the bottom of the wicker basket. The broken meats and bits of bread fell in a shower all round the unhappy man. His face was besmeared and bleeding; for the rough ends of the dry willow twigs had cut and scratched his head. His habit was stained with grease and filth. A general guffaw burst from the students and women, the voices of the latter rising shrill and discordant in the narrow street. The friar was frightened half out of his wits. He stood there rolling his eyes, invoking the

saints, crying for mercy, trying vainly to get at his face to wipe the blood from it, like one distraught. One drunken German was still rushing about brandishing a stout club; but he slipped on a greasy mass that had fallen from the friar's basket, and tumbled, cursing thickly in his own language, to the ground. The crowd laughed the more. It was beginning to regain its easy-going good humour. The friar moved his head from side to side, as far as his unusual collar would permit, still rolling his eyes and muttering appeals to the "good gentlemen all," until he flopped down upon the cobbles and sat in the midst of the débris of his morning's begging, staring helplessly at his tormentors.

How it would have ended I know not, had not a whispered warning—"The guard!"—split up the crowd, and sent them flying right and left through the tortuous streets and intersecting lanes. Maitre Louis and Arnoul made away with the rest, and left the two in the middle of the road, the shaven head of the one pitifully and ludicrously bobbing up and down in its collar of broken twigs, the other lying prone beside him.

Such sights, and worse, were far from infrequent; and Arnoul soon became accustomed to them. But he worked on steadily at his studies none the less, thinking of his Devon home and his brother, and of the great things he was to do. He had his reliquary always about his neck—the golden reliquary with the splinter of Holy Cross that the Lady Sibilla had given him. And from time to time—not very often, it is true, since the voyage was a long one—he had news of Buckfast and Woodleigh, and sometimes even of Moreleigh, by monks or pilgrims journeying through Paris.

The news, scarce as it was, was good and always welcome; and when Abbot Benet had passed through

on his way to Citeaux again in the following year, he had listened to a long and detailed account of all that was happening at home. Helion was dead and had left much property to the Abbey. Roger and Budd were well and happy ; but they both missed him sorely—or said they did. Isobel was more tyrannical than ever ; and Sir Guy was, as usual, working hard at Woodleigh and helping the Moreleigh priest, who had become a chronic invalid, incessantly.

“Your brother will kill himself with work,” said the Abbot with evident approval. “He is a most zealous priest and a true Christian.”

“And how is Vipont?” asked Arnoul tentatively. “Guy must have a great deal to do with him now, if Sir John is so unwell.”

Abbot Benet frowned. “Vipont is as well as usual, and as quarrelsome as ever. He is making trouble over his fief at Holne now. His land joins ours. But what interest have you in Sir Sigar?” The Abbot looked his question as well as spoke it.

“None,” replied the boy, blushing in spite of himself. “That is to say, practically none. But I thought Guy——”

“And how are you doing yourself?” asked the monk, interrupting him. “I shall have to give Sir Guy an account of you when I return. I can see that you are well. But your studies . . . ? Your work . . . ?”

The interview veered to the lad’s doings in Paris ; the Abbot listening without any comment to all that he had to tell him.

But on the whole Arnoul was drifting. The Abbot carried back a glowing account of him to Buckfast and Woodleigh. The canons at St Victor’s had endorsed his statements as to work and studies. He himself

would have been surprised had he been able to realise how far he had changed. But it was true nevertheless. Maitre Louis had not proved the best of mentors; and Arnoul looked up to him and admired him so that he would not hear a word against him from anyone. Maitre Giles had tried to speak to him once, but he had been silenced by Arnoul's prompt anger. Nor would he even countenance any of his own misgivings that made themselves felt as Louis showed more and more of that extraordinary and complex character that lay hidden under his affectation of dialectic and indifference.

On one occasion they had gone to a tavern together. It was at the time of the evening walk, when public lectures were over. When they reached the great street of St Jacques, Maitre Louis spoke confidentially. "A little wine for the stomach's sake! It is the counsel of St Paul. After Decretals it helps the digestion. And I know a famous wine-seller close at hand where we can have the choicest."

His companion did not demur, and, turning a corner, they entered the cabaret. It was very dark and somewhat thick with the stale fumes of wine, but it was certainly a cut above the filthy tavern in the Rue St Jacques. Louis was evidently a well-known patron of the host, and at once began to speak with him and with the other frequenters of the place.

"Your best," he commanded. "Your best, Messire Julien! Bring it out! I have brought you a new companion, a brave fellow and an Englishman, who desires the freedom of your hospitality. What! Jacques le Boiteux! At this time of day! Why, even I would not be here now, if it were not in the execution of a plain duty!"

"Duty!" laughed Maitre Jacques le Boiteux thickly. "'Tis a duty that is welcome none the less, my excellent doctor! Aales, my girl, look at Maitre Louis. He comes hither at the call of duty!" And Maitre Jacques joined with Aales in a laugh at the bare idea.

"Duty!" he continued, grinning all over his pimply face. "Duty! Of course it is a duty! 'Tis a duty that brings me here too! 'Tis a duty that brings Aales! We all have come because of duty!" He embraced the eight or ten scholars, serving men and women in a grandiose sweep of his hand.

"I shall prove to you, my good Maitre Louis, by the Organon of Aristotle and Porphyry his Isagoge that it is a duty! You will admit that the Manicheans are the most damnable heretics, to begin with?"

"I admit nothing, Maitre Jacques. You will prove in as many arguments as you please and just as many points as you please. But I am here to drink mine host's good wine and not to chop logic with a lawyer. Logic for the schools, say I! Not for the wine-house! Ha, Jeannette, my beauty! Here is a new suitor for your fair hand! Come hither, girl, and make the acquaintance of Maitre Arnoul the Englishman! If you are off with me, there's no reason why you should not love my friends! Now don't you be jealous, my Thomassine! Don't sulk over there in a corner! Here am I, getting Blanches Mains out of the way, that I may talk to you by yourself!" And he laughed brutally.

Arnoul shrank from the rough tone of familiarity and the laugh. This was a side of the Gascon's character that he certainly had not seen before; for Louis had dropped for the moment his habitual mask of gravity and learning and discovered what lay beneath it. He

was learning much of Paris and the scholars under the Gascon's tutelage. He did not like the laugh and he did not like the words; but, ashamed of himself for his dislike of both, he turned to the really beautiful girl who made her way over towards him.

"So you are Arnoul the Englishman," she said, her lips parting in a smile over two rows of pearly teeth. "I have heard that pig Louis speak of you so often. And he has not lied," she continued, frankly scrutinising his face and form. "He said you were an Apollo or a Paris. I don't know them, but they must be fine fellows if they are anything like you."

Messire Julien's wine was good; and the company, when he had got over his initial dislike of Maitre Jacques le Boiteux and forgotten the manner of his introduction, Arnoul found charming enough. It was the first, but by no means the last, visit he paid to Julien's tavern.

So he continued, studying the crabbed pages at St Victor's and reading, without altogether understanding it, the living book of human nature that lay opened before his eyes. He began to think it a fine thing to boast and swagger about as others did, and spent far more than he could afford on clothes and ornament, frequently making his way to the Town on the other bank of the Seine to visit the shops and make purchases there. Old Ben Israel noted him down with a shrewd leer as a future client, and bowed until his four fringes touched the earth whenever he met him. Arnoul had indeed fitted himself out in fine garments that made him look far more like a courtier than a student. He had exchanged his Devon homespun for a gay dress in which camlet, and even silk, was made up; and he had procured a high, conical felt hat, a new and special

creation of Messire Richart Bon-Valet. This he wore on special days, when he left his books behind him and went off on some escapade with Maitre Louis or alone. He spent hours on the Pont au Change, gazing into the jewellers' shops and turning over in his mind whether his little store of money would allow of a golden ring or a buckle. When he reluctantly decided that it would not permit of so great an extravagance, he almost resolved to wear his reliquary so that it could be seen. He was in danger of becoming a prig and a fop; and in spite of all his good intentions and resolves, his studies were becoming very remiss and intermittent. When Maitre Louis, as he had so often threatened he would, left St Victor's to take up his abode in a private lodging, he had half a mind to accompany him. But the advice Guy had so incessantly poured into his ears at Woodleigh restrained him, or he had not yet sufficient courage to take so bold a step. He remained at St Victor's and hovered round Louis' lodging, so that it would have been difficult to tell from his dress or the society he frequented whether he was an extern student or a member of a hospitium.

Thus he lived, dipping into his parchments occasionally, and turning up in his place in the class-rooms just so often as was necessary to escape a reprimand from the Canon Prefect, until the King returned from his crusade. He made a great point of going to all the religious celebrations of City, Town and University—but this more from love of excitement than from any devotion they aroused. Everyone went to them, and one met one's friends there. Also, his visits to Messire Julien's became more frequent. He was beginning to make a great many friends there; and his taste, in friends, was changing too. He would have put that

fact down to the enlarging of his mind, no doubt, or to a certain liberalness of principles that began to make itself apparent in his character.

But Maitre Giles was the real cause, though certainly the unintentional one, of his ultimately taking himself and his belongings away from St Victor's.

Now Maitre Giles was a very excellent and orthodox person, as will already have been perceived. But he had his failings and limitations. He was, like so many orthodox persons, a terrible bore; and he was stupid to boot. This combination of qualities, together with a habit he possessed of actively interesting himself in the welfare of other people, made him extremely unpopular among the majority of his fellow-students. But, no whit daunted by unpopularity, he pursued the even tenor of his way, grinding at his texts, poring over manuscripts, giving vent to strange-sounding, though perfectly orthodox, theories, offering advice in season and out of season, and generally making himself obnoxious.

Maitre Giles was pained and shocked at the backslidings of Arnoul. He followed him about the Abbey as a ferret follows its prey through the windings of a warren, and not infrequently contrived, as he supposed, to impress the young man with his admonitions. Among other things, he told him that he ought not to waste so much of his time staring in the shops. That annoyed and irritated Arnoul so much that Maitre Giles gave no further advice that day. He should employ his time as it suited him; and what was that meddling Giles that he should watch what he did, thought the boy angrily. On another occasion he overtook him in the streets of the City, near the great square that fronts the palace.

"Have you seen," he asked, "the Christian Saracens who have come to Paris? They were converted to the true faith by the sight of the fortitude of King Louis in his captivity. Also, the Preachers and the Minorites taught them to see the wickedness of Mohammed's law, that intoxicates the soul. They have come with letters patent from the King, commanding that they be lodged and fed befittingly until his return, when he will himself see to their honourable maintenance."

"No." Arnoul had not seen them.

"And do you know that the King is coming back from his wars in Egypt?" Arnoul had not heard the rumour of the King's return; but it, no less than a sight of the Saracens, promised excitement. Maitre Giles often managed to pick up authentic scraps of information. He would tolerate him and learn what was to happen. It appeared that King Louis had been obliged to give hostages for his person and set out for home, leaving Egypt unconquered, on account of the disastrous war in Flanders. He was to arrive almost as soon as the envoys from the French returned. There would be great doings and rejoicings when the King came home. His coming would give a new turn to the war of factions in the University. King Louis was sure to support the regulars against the seculars. Quite right, too! The religious were certainly in the right and the seculars in the wrong.

Arnoul was nettled. "Why do you say that?" he asked sharply. "Everyone knows that the friars are lazy, good-for-nothing fellows who will not work because they find begging pay so well. Look at the fine houses they have! Look at their intolerable pride! They and their rules are the curse of society. And they preach against the getting of an honest living. They

would stop all chances of a career in the Church, did they but have their way."

"So," replied Maitre Giles, "you have had all that from Louis and his crew. I knew they were poisoning your mind. Do you know anything of the friars themselves? Have you talked with Brother Thomas at St Jacques, or with Brother Bonaventure the Franciscan?"

"I heard them lecture," retorted Arnoul. "The one seems to be a pious fool of a mystic, and the other is too heavy and dull for comprehension. How he manages to get his class full puzzles me."

"But he does manage. Louis, with his incessant cackling about St Amour, has prejudiced you. That man is a saint, mark my words. He is the cleverest man in France, and old Maitre Albert knew what he was saying when he prophesied that the Dumb Ox should shake the world with his bellowing. And so simple and kind he is! Why, he will give hours of his time to helping a poor fellow, like you or me, in a difficulty! I would go to him before anyone else, if I were in trouble—though he is only a year or so older than I am. And, what is more, he would listen to me and help me, just as if I were the King himself or the Duchess of Brabant. But I see you are deep stuck in the mire of prejudice and hatred of their holy lives. Come, Maitre Arnoul! This will never do!"

Arnoul sickened of Giles' criticism and smarted under his well-meant fault-finding. He left him as soon as he could—after they had seen the converted Saracens in their gorgeous Eastern dresses, the eleemosynary guests of King Louis at the old palace. And he left him in a temper. Giles was a conceited coxcomb—setting up in a sanctimonious way as the censor of his doings! He would not brook it!

One or two more interviews with Maitre Giles at St Victor's made up his mind. It was obvious that as long as he remained at the Abbey he could not shake off this dour and persistent critic. So, saying nothing of his intention save to Maitre Louis, one fine day, just after the King's arrival in his capital, he followed the example of his friend and vanished from St Victor's.

CHAPTER XII

ARNOUL ASSERTS HIS RACE

ARNOUL'S new lodgings were in a mean street not far from the *hôtel* of the Abbot of St Denis, at the extreme north-western corner of the University wall, near the Tour de Nesle. They were close to those of his friend Maitre Louis. Once he had taken the step of removing, bag and baggage, from St Victor's, he began to realise to some extent what he was really doing. There were new dangers as well as the old with which he would have to cope, and he resolved to be more assiduous than ever before in his work and study. He would, of course, follow the secular doctors now, since, in a sense, he had definitely cast in his lot with them in leaving the hospitium of the canons. And he would strive all the more to justify the change he had made and to prove himself capable of managing his own affairs. He could not forget Guy's great hopes; and, after all, was he not a de Valletort? He meant to get on.

The presence of King Louis in his capital made a considerable difference in the gaiety and whirl of life in that excitement-loving place. But the King, while acknowledging the glad welcome of his burghers, took little part in their pleasure at his return. Rumour had it that he was heart-broken over the failure of his Holy War and his own capture, and had shut himself up in the Old Palace to brood. As a matter of fact, Arnoul saw for himself that he was sad and disheartened; for,

instead of wearing the apparel that befitted the King of Kings upon earth, he had discarded the costly furs and scarlet silks that he used to wear for plain, sad colours, mostly grey or blue, and of a coarse texture. And he would no longer suffer the trappings of his charger to be of gold embroidery or rich velvet. Even the golden stirrups and greaves had been replaced by plainer metal.

Still, notwithstanding the royal sadness, the City was gayer than ever, full as it was of high ecclesiastical and military dignitaries, and Maitre Arnoul's last resolutions like the former ones began to waver.

When the news came that the King of England would make his royal progress homewards through France, and that King Louis had given orders to the magnates and burghers of all the cities through which he would pass on his way to Paris, to receive him with his queen and court as was fitting, his excitement knew no bounds. All the English Nation was excited and full of preparations for Henry's reception by the University—so excited that, while its members shortened their weekly commons in order to provide for the expenses of a right royal welcome to their monarch, many of them did not forget to drink frequently to his health and prosperity nor to quarrel lustily with the other Nations.

Arnoul, on that ever-to-be-remembered night before the King's expected entry into Paris, had distinguished himself by being the most prominent figure in a common tavern brawl. It was at Messire Julien's pot-house. Louis was there and le Boiteux, with the usual company, male and female. But the place was more crowded than usual. All the wine-sellers and innkeepers were doing a roaring trade in those days. There were a couple of Arabians, the one a student, the other a man of middle age who got his living by hawking Spanish parchments,

translations of Aristotle, treatises on medicine, works on astrology ; who had forgotten the saying of the Lord Mohammed, " Never drink wine ; for it is the root of all evil." There was a shoemaker and his wife, from over the bridge, sitting together on a bench in a corner. The shoemaker was a clerk who, for reasons of his own, had given up his studies years before and settled down to leather, keeping the benefit of clergy that his minor orders secured for him, just as many of the tradesmen of the Town had done, preferring the jurisdiction of the Church to that of the civil courts. Aales and Jeannette were there as well, with Thomassine. And there were others, scholars, gentlemen's men, women. One singular personage was present, conversing in low tones with Maitre Louis, whom Arnoul never remembered having seen before. He was a melancholy-looking specimen of a man with high, sallow cheek-bones and deep-set, piercing eyes. His enormous egg-shaped head was bald except for a fringe of iron-grey hair that began behind either ear, sticking out in wisps at the sides, and continuing in a ragged patch round the back of his head. His hands were knotted and wrinkled, with long and dirty nails, and his fingers writhed incessantly as he whispered, twining themselves together and separating again. Clad in a rusty suit of black, with no ornament of any kind save a leathern wallet to lighten its sombre hue, he was leaning forward in his eagerness towards Louis ; and, from the way in which his lips were moving and twisting, he was evidently very much in earnest in whatever he was saying. Arnoul took a seat on the bench near Jeannette. He had on his finest colours and his conical hat. Messire Julien was bustling about attending to his guests. All were making merry, drinking, joking, singing snatches of popular songs, in

the best of humours with themselves and each other, when Jacques le Boiteux, without rhyme or reason, made an insolent remark to Arnoul, coupling his name with that of Jeannette Blanches Mains.

The boy's blood was up on an instant, and a dull red wave of anger spread over his face and subsided, leaving him deathly pale. He gripped the handle of a small dagger that was hidden beneath his tunic. But Maitre Jacques, either from stupidity or of set purpose, continued his insulting words.

"You think," he sneered, "you can lord it over us with your airs and graces, swaggering about in your fine clothes! I wonder how much Ben Israel has advanced you, upstart cub of an Englishman that you are! Why, you have been here less time than any of us, and you put on airs as if you were a licentiate at least! You and your precious King! What's your knavish King coming here for, I wonder? And Louis! It's just like him to play the pious, peaceable monarch and order us to welcome your . . .! Faugh! A fig for your little Henry and for you, and for all Englishmen say I!"

But it was more than Arnoul could stand; and, leaping to his feet, he made at the besotten reveller.

"Take that," he shouted, "and that!" as he drove his fist fair home between Maitre Jacques' eyes, knocking him off the bench and sending him sprawling on the floor. "The next time you dare to speak of me, or of my King and country, you will find this steel in your lying carcass." And he brandished the dagger above the kicking lawyer.

But he had reckoned without Aales. She sprang at him liked one possessed, clawing at him with her nails and trying, despite the weapon, to get near enough to him

to scratch his face or to bite him. In a twinkling the tavern was in an uproar. Everyone was fighting with everyone else, and the low room resounded with blows and shouting. But it was soon over; and, while Messire Julien was ruefully counting up the damage, Arnoul found himself pushed out into the street and in the company of Maitre Louis and his solemn companion, the man in black.

"That was a foolish thing to do," said the melancholy stranger, as if speaking to himself. "A little more and it might have come to bloodshed. And after the Bull about carrying arms, too! Young men are so impetuous and rash!"

His voice was deep and resonant, with a strong nasal twang; but Arnoul was still too angry to notice it.

"What would you have me do?" he asked furiously. "Would you see me swallow such an insult tamely? Nay! I shall even now return and plunge my dagger into his lying body!"

He turned to put his threat into execution, but they restrained him and led him away to Louis' lodgings; and there, when he had recovered his temper, he was introduced to Maitre Barthelemy—"the most subtle and profound alchemist in the world." Those were the words of Maitre Louis. Maitre Barthelemy bowed, but he did not smile. He was one of those persons who take themselves very seriously. On the contrary, he frowned; and, producing a scrap of dirty parchment from his wallet, he asked the date—day, hour and year—of Arnoul's birth.

"You are," he observed, "a person of singular qualities and fortune. I can read in the lines of your features that my art shall some day be of use to you. You will take notice," he said, turning to Maitre Louis as he

made some crabbed signs on the parchment, "that he has a notable development of the forehead. Moreover, he was born on a Thursday. I would dare hazard that even Mercurius was in conjunction.

"And, touching the other matter, my good Maitre Louis, you shall see it for yourself. I have obtained it thrice already; but the powder must be added to the liquid—and slowly." He proceeded to give long directions in a language quite unintelligible to Arnoul.

"You have followed me in all I have said?" he asked when he had done, looking towards Louis, who bent his head in answer. Then, turning to Arnoul again, he began in a less mysterious tone of voice, "Young sir, I must cast your horoscope and read the stars in your behalf. The mystic heavens of the divine Pythagoras will be in your favour. You will find written a good fortune and a high station, be sure of it! But be more prudent with your weapon in future! If word of it were to reach the Rector or the Bishop . . .!" Maitre Barthelemy made a gesture expressive of what might be expected.

As Arnoul had quite recovered his temper by now, he hung his head sheepishly at the older man's rebuke. He was somewhat mystified by the extraordinary language to which he had been listening, and impressed by the alchemist's manner. He certainly was puzzled, though he called to memory some chance expressions let drop by Louis, and knew what implicit faith he had in the man. "I shall read the stars and cast your life," continued the black-robed Maitre Barthelemy. "You shall come to my poor lodging behind the Château de Vauvert whenever you will—whenever you have need of me or of my art." The lad shuddered involuntarily, for it was well known that the château was haunted.

Not even the King could induce anyone to live in it.

"You have a future before you," the alchemist reiterated. "Of that I am already convinced. And you will come to Maitre Barthelemy whenever you wish his help."

The night was wearing away. Arnoul was fascinated by the glowing—if half-intelligible—sentences of the quack. He looked at Maitre Louis and saw him drinking in every word, with open eyes and mouth. Well, he might perhaps some day avail himself of the opportunity of consulting Maitre Barthelemy the magician. But it was late now; and to-morrow the kings rode into Paris. He had not drunk so much but that he knew it was high time to get to bed, if he was to be up in time to see the entry. So he made his adieux and sought his own lodging, leaving Maitre Louis to listen alone to the astrological and alchemical jargon of Maitre Barthelemy.

CHAPTER XIII

UNIVERSITY FACTIONS

IT was ten o'clock by the bells of the city of Paris. Ten o'clock, though, had it not been for the deserted streets in the quarter of the University, it might well have been high noon. The sun shone down upon the roofs and gables of the crowded houses, and sent its beams through the narrow intervals between the overhanging upper storeys into all the nooks and crannies of the empty streets below, seeking out and showing up clear and distinct every heap of garbage and every scrap of refuse that littered the ground. It was ten o'clock and not high noon, for the beams came slantwise through, making a narrow line of half-shadow—where all was bathed in a diffused yellow glow—along one side of the streets that ran from north to south. Where the stream of sunlight touched the jutting windows of some more than usually exuberant edifice, or a cornice projecting farther across the narrow street than its fellows, it made bulging shadows, of queer shapes and consistencies, upon the pavement. But it was difficult to see just where the shadow began and the sunlight ended ; for the whole space, even in the narrowest of the twisting lanes and where the buildings jostled most together, was full of light. There were few people abroad ; and, but for the occasional man or woman passing through the deserted streets, Paris might have been a city of the dead.

On a sudden, with the jangling of the bells, the silent

city burst into teeming life. Crowds of students poured out of the class-rooms, and filled the now animated open spaces. It was the end of the morning school, and, after some five hours of work—and in many cases of fasting—men were ready for the beef and porridge of oatmeal and gravy that formed the staple of their breakfast and dinner rolled into one. Most of the students carried books and rolls of parchment in which they had been noting down, in the curious mediæval shorthand that students used, the chief points of the morning's lessons. These they would study diligently after the meal, if they were not then occupied in giving lessons themselves, until the hour for supper came at five in the afternoon. Then, always supposing that they were diligent scholars, there would follow the discussion of serious problems among themselves, and further studies, until the approach of bedtime warned them, especially in the winter, that to lie with cold feet was neither healthy nor pleasant, and they stamped about for half-an-hour or so to get them warm again before turning in for the night.

The scholars were coming from the various classes singly or in groups; some of them at once making off in haste towards the lodging, college or cloister where their dinner awaited them, others lagging behind to talk. One little knot of men in particular stood and chatted together. It was composed of only four or five students, and among them was Maitre Louis. But, from the way they were looking about them they were evidently expecting someone else. It was Arnoul for whom they were tarrying. He came up to them with a brisk step—not, be it confessed, from school, but from his lodging. He had been adding a few finishing touches to his finery there. These were his guests.

He had invited them, on the counsel of Maitre Louis, to do him the honour of dining with him at an eating-house of some report on the other side of the river. Not that the viands would be anything much out of the ordinary to which they were accustomed at home. That was not to be expected. But it was not home; that was the consideration that lent the charm. And there was good wine to be had without the trouble of sending out for it. The waiting guests welcomed their host with great cordiality. Besides Louis and those who were invited at his suggestion, Arnoul had insisted upon asking Maitre Giles and Maitre Pierre to be of the party; why, possibly even he could not have said. It may have been that he was anxious to emphasise his own independence and to show to his former fellows at St Victor's, through the talkative Giles, how well he was getting on outside the fold of the Abbey. The others were students in Arts and, to a man, of the secular party.

They made their way quickly to the Petit Pont, and across the city. Then, crossing the Pont au Change, and passing the Grand Châtelet, they came to the place at which they were to dine, and found the room set apart for them. After the meal, which proved after all rather more than an ordinary affair, since mine host had put himself out to provide one or two delicacies for the occasion, the wine began to loosen the tongues of the diners. They praised the cooking and the excellence of the fare, voting Arnoul a prince among good fellows and an altogether admirable Englishman. One of his guests compared him with the Flemings, much to the latter's disadvantage, and swore that, though it was well known that all Flemings were gluttons, none could have ordered so choice and so select a repast.

The talk veered by degrees to the University and its doings. Maitre Louis let loose the flood by a reference to his hero, St Amour. Everyone, naturally, had something to say. They were not students of the University of Paris for nothing, these guests of Arnoul; and, far more than the lessons that they learned in the schools, the burning questions that agitated the whole University interested them.

"I heard yesterday," said one, "that the Rector has made a new decree by which the extern students are affected."

"No! No! That's not right," corrected another. "You have mixed it up with the Bull. There is a rumour that the Pope has issued another Bull—a most abominable Bull—against the true and natural representatives of our University. St Amour, they say, he has deprived of his benefices, with Odo of Douay and Nicholas of Bar and Canon Christian."

"It's an unheard-of insult, if it be true; and the fault lies at the door of those accursed black friars. Why can't the Pope accept the fair arrangement of our sovereign lord the King, I should like to know? Isn't the commission he appointed good enough? The four archbishops he named allowed the Jacobins to keep their two chairs—and that in perpetuum—against the express and just wishes of the University. What more do they want? One would think they would never be satisfied."

"I crave your pardon," put in Maitre Giles, "but the Jacobins had nothing to do with the Bull. You know perfectly well, all of you, how some of the seculars have been stirring up the common people of the Town, as well as the members of the University, against the religious and the life they lead. St Amour has said

publicly, not once but many times, that they are accursed because they live on alms. He has denied that they can preach or hear confessions, even if sent by the Bishop, or by our lord the Pope himself. And many other things has he said too scandalous for repetition."

"One would think you were a mendicant to hear you talk," sneered another, taking part in the conversation. "Pass the wine there, Maitre Paul! Why, what interest can any of the students in this free and enlightened University have in defending such wolves in sheep's clothing?"

"The interest of right and of truth," snapped Maitre Giles. It is true he was something of a busybody; it is true he was at times a singular bore; but he knew he was right this time, and resolved to defend the Jacobins as stoutly as he could.

"They have filched two chairs from the University," growled one.

"They have allowed its privileges to be infringed, and dared to go on teaching when the doctors shut the schools," argued another.

"They have done their best to destroy St Amour," said Maitre Louis angrily.

"And what of all that?" asked Giles, imperturbed by the storm of wrath he was raising. "What is the University? It is papal, I believe. We are all clerks, are we not, and under the Church's jurisdiction? And it is a place for teaching. Who better than the Pope to decide who shall have the chairs and who shall not? It is his right—not the King's or ours. And again, I ask you, where will you find better teachers than those in St Jacques? Fie! You are partisans to talk thus!"

"Partisans! And what are you?" they all cried in

chorus. "What are you but a partisan of the smug and sanctified friars?"

"Have a little more wine," suggested Maitre Giles, keeping himself well in hand. "Maitre Arnoul! Pass the wine again, I pray you! Partisans, you said? No; I am not a partisan. I hear lectures at St Victor's, where the canons are, and at the Sorbonne, where your St Amour was. No; I think I am not a partisan! But this hatred of the frairs makes my blood boil. Why should they be persecuted? Why should the poet be allowed to write so spitefully of them? Why should they be hated by the people? What have they done, I should like to know?"

"Done?" roared the first speaker. "Done? What have they not done? They have stolen the two chairs they are so proud of. They stand apart from the rest of the University, caring nothing for its honour or its welfare. They seek to oust the secular professors, with their knavish policy and their great parade of sanctity. Done, is it? Isn't that enough to have done, rascally hypocrites that they are? How can you or I succeed, if these scoundrelly friars are to come into the places that were meant for us and do the work of clerks and teachers free, gratis, for nothing?"

"Ah! There you have hit the nail on the head," rejoined Maitre Giles with a smirk of joy. "It's seldom but when it touches through the pocket that the heart moves. So . . . ! They work for nothing, and they do better work than you! That's where the shoe pinches, is it? Well, if that's the case, a fig for your disinterestedness, and a fig for your love of the University!"

"Have a care, Maitre Giles," whispered Arnoul the host. "Do not provoke the gentleman too much!"

"In God's name!" Giles broke in roughly—and this

showed that he was indeed in earnest, for Arnoul had never heard him use even the mildest of expletives—"In God's name! Would you have me listen to these slanders and not answer them?"

Arnoul was silent, if the rest of the company was not.

"Who is there in all Paris comparable to St Amour?" asked one.

"Are the seculars to vanish from the Church?"

"Who founded the regulars I know not—Dominic, Francis, Benet—but the priests are of the institution of God," argued another.

"You may say what you will," replied Maitre Giles. "If the seculars had remained as they were founded, they would even now be as the religious are. It was a clerk secular, I mind me, who said 'Little Jesus! Little Jesus! How I have confirmed your law and exalted it in this question! Forsooth, had I wished to go against you, I should have known how to weaken it with stronger proofs and arguments, and even to disprove it altogether!'"

"Those are the words of Simon of Tournai. I have heard them before," commented Maitre Louis, in the act of lifting his cup to his lips. "But they were said long ago; and nowadays no secular would ever dream of saying things like that."

"Probably not," said Maitre Giles dryly. "He would find his persiflage against the friars of little effect, did he commence it with such a heading. We are more prudent now, good Louis; but we have none the less the hateful verses of Rutebœuf to listen to."

"And whose fault is that," another asked roughly, "if it is not the friars' themselves?"

"'Tis the fault of the seculars, instigating all Paris against the religious," replied Giles calmly.

Arnoul's dinner, which began so well, threatened to end badly, if not in a free fight between the secular students and Maitre Giles. He attempted to draw the conversation to a more general issue.

"But this antagonism is not a new thing," he ventured. "Nor are the faults all upon one side."

"Oh, Wonderful!" exclaimed several of the guests. "Maitre Arnoul has so keen a mind! He has touched the truth in this matter!"

"I believe you," replied Maitre Giles. "It is by no means a new thing. The University has known it and has had to fight against it from the beginning, as far back as Abelard—and there was a Bernard to fight against him. . . . And now it is the religious and St Amour and Odo. It has always been the same. Why was Aristotle forbidden to the students, if Thomas can expound him now in open school?"

"I have heard it said that the early translations contained Saracen errors," answered Maitre Pierre, speaking for the first time. "But indeed it is as Maitre Arnoul and Maitre Giles have said. From the beginning there have been two sides. You have Anselm and Bernard against Abelard."

"Yes, but that's not the same thing. The cases are not parallel. Bernard stayed in his monastery, and did not try to force himself and his monks into positions in the University; whereas these friars. . . . There's no contenting them. Besides, they are not so holy and so disinterested as they would have us think."

"Bethink you!" Maitre Pierre returned again. "There are two sides to every question, and much is forgotten in the heat of argument. There are bad friars—not a doubt of it! But that is no reason to condemn the whole order. And because there are good seculars it's

no reason why we should hold them all for saints. This crisis is far more a battle of principles and privileges than of personalities. But it is the personalities that come to the fore and make themselves felt, while the principles lie hidden deep beneath them."

"But, Maitre Pierre, surely Maitre William is a notable personality," said Louis.

"Undoubtedly," was his reply. "Undoubtedly he is a personality, but you would not have it that he and Christian and Odo and Nicholas are stirring up the clerks and people against the friars simply in order to make themselves felt. No! They represent what is bad in the secular spirit. It is incarnate in their persons and comes out with all their personality soaked into it. I do not say that they are bad men. . . ."

"I should think not indeed!"

"Incredible presumption!"

"The jackanapes of a friar-toadying . . . Pah!"

"No; they are not bad men," Pierre went on when he could make himself heard. "Maitre William has done much for the University and for the new college of Maitre Robert of Sorbon. Neither is the secular spirit altogether a bad thing in itself. But in this question it is the misfortune of these doctors to be the representatives of all that is worst in that spirit. They are known by what is bad in that they represent rather than by what is good."

"And the cursed friars," argued one of the seculars, "they are to be known always by what little there is of good and not by all that there is of bad."

"Your pardon, Maitre Just! 'Tis the other way about here also. You and your party know them by what is bad. You laugh at their begging and poverty, and hate them for it. But you love to know them by

that crazy book of the Abbot Joachim. You think of them all as blasphemous deceivers because one or two of the Cordeliers have adopted the teaching of the 'Eternal Gospel.'"

"Of all the lies that have come from the mouth of hell," growled Maitre Just, banging on the table till the cups jumped again, "there are none such as are to be found in that unholy book! There's a sample of your friars for you! Is it not the barefooted brothers of the Franciscans who have published the blasphemies?"

"And St Amour who has written 'The Perils of the Last Times'?" questioned Pierre innocently.

"There's no comparison between them!" shouted Just. "Where has William written or taught that his doctrine is better than that of Christ? Yet your unholy friars are preaching a book that asserts that the teaching of the Abbot Joachim excels that of the Lord! A book that states that the Gospel will come to an end in the year 1260, and a new law of the spirit succeed it! And they assert that only the barefooted are fit to teach men eternal and spiritual truths! Accursed that they are! Spawn of the devil, those friars!"

"My good friend!" said Pierre, endeavouring to calm the angry man. "Surely you do not believe that the friars teach such wicked doctrines! Have you heard Maitre Bonus-Homo or Brunetus say such things in the schools? It is as I say. You fasten upon the evil teaching of a few, and dub the whole order heretical and accursed in consequence. It would be just as foolish for me or my side to judge of all the seculars by the book William of St Amour has written."

"But privileges! Privileges! The University privileges!" began another. "They must not be infringed, and the friars are infringing them! They will not stand

with the rest! If they had their way, they would turn the University into a nursery of begging brats and recruit us all for the glory of their own orders!"

"And then," put in Giles with a laugh, "they would begin to fight among themselves! Wherever you have men you will have battles; and neither the wisdom of William nor the sanctity of Brother Humbert can oust human nature."

"Come, fill your cups!" cried Arnoul, glad to see that the conversation was taking a better turn, and trying to steer it yet farther from the dangerous rocks of controversy. "Fill your cups and let us drink to both sides—to the corded friars and the black friars as well as to William and Nicholas and Odo of Douay! Drink!" And he set them the example by draining his cup the first.

The conversation, like all conversations in those days, had been heated and intense. Men were very much in earnest, and the merest spark would have sufficed to set the whole University in a blaze. Their host had been noting the changing expressions of his guests as well as listening to their words, and he had seen the rapid play of feature that accompanied the speeches. To a man the seculars were down upon the friars and would hear no word in their favour. Their faces had expressed as much when Giles and Pierre were speaking. And, if Giles was an index of the other party, they were as unready to listen to anything in favour of the secular side. Maitre Pierre, however, seemed to have struck a happy line in pointing out that there were undoubted faults to be found on both sides. Arnoul could quite conceive how the friars seized upon all that was worst in their adversaries and exalted it into the common type of the secular. And he saw for himself how the blame-

less life and real teaching of the Franciscans and Dominicans were distorted into crafty, shifty, and even unchristian living and principles, when such insane ravings as were contained in the "Eternal Gospel" were put forward as a sample of what the friars held and practised. There were faults on both sides, as Maitre Pierre said ; but neither was entirely bad. Still, of the two, the seculars certainly made for personal independence and liberty ; and that, to a lad of Arnoul's character, seemed to be worth far more than obedience and restraint.

When his party was over, as they made their way back through the crowded Town to the south side of the river, the latest production of Parisian satire fell upon their ears. Someone had set it to a lilting air and was singing it for the benefit of the gaping crowd. It was a harsh voice and an unmusical that sang the words, but the people applauded and caught up the refrain, destined to resound for many a long day in Parisian streets :—

"Frère Predicator
Sont de mult simple ator
Et s'ont in lor destor
Mainte bon parisi.
Papelart et Béguin
Ont le siècle honi."

Maitre Just turned to Arnoul laughing. "There's your friar ! Drawn to the life ! A nice reputation he's got, in truth !"

Giles frowned angrily. "It's that spiteful Rutebœuf again !" he exclaimed. "Were it not for such as he and his kidney, the good people of Paris would know where to look for holiness and learning. But what with these jealousies and squabbles in the schools, and the acrid

spleen of such men as this sour rhymers, and the readiness of the people to abuse anything that is good, they do not know where to look at all."

"Papelart et Béguin
Ont le siècle honi,"

—shouted the crowd in chorus.

"Yes! That's it," commented Giles. "They learn to hate all that is devout and religious, and make a mock at sanctity and holy lives. They will ere long become a nation of infidels."

"In the University," said Maitre Pierre under his breath, as if speaking to himself, so low that Arnoul just managed to catch his words. "In the schools I fear me there are already infidels, learning and teaching. Some of these seculars have gone so far in their hatred of the religious that they have attacked religion itself."

"Papelart et Béguin
Ont le siècle honi"

—The words and tune caught and stuck in Arnoul's mind. He walked on with the others in a brown study, thinking. He had learnt many things at his dinner party.

CHAPTER XIV

KING HENRY ENTERS PARIS

THE sun rose smiling and fair on a fair and smiling City. Paris hardly knew herself, she was so gay and garlanded. The streets had been swept clean—so clean that one could have spread one's best velvet cloak upon the cobbles without a trace of dust. All garbage and mud, the litter of the straw merchants and the scraps and odds and ends that would make the way unsightly, had been carefully removed. The houses and churches that lined the road from the Porte Papale to the Petit Pont and on, across through the City to the Pont au Change, and on again, passing under the frowning arches of the Grand Châtelet, through the Town and out by the Porte St Martin were adorned with festoons of leaves and flowers. Flowers and leafy branches were everywhere, in the windows and over the doors, looped across on ropes from one side of the road to the other and hanging, bright with interwoven bits of cloth and painted devices, over the route of the royal progress. The bells of Notre Dame were pealing: and all the abbey bells and church bells, bells little and great, bells high and low, sonorous and cracked, answered in chorus.

All Paris was afoot and making its way, with smiles and laughter and jests, towards the Porte Papale—Paris, that is to say the University; for the sun looked down, this cloudless morning, upon three distinct gatherings of human beings; and the one at the southern gate was

of scholars and students. The living units of this first—and they undoubtedly thought themselves the most important of all—were converging from every direction upon the Papal Gate. The colleges and the friaries, the lodging-houses and monasteries and abbeys, within and without the wall, were pouring out their occupants in continuous streams that filtered through the crooked channels of the lesser streets, and grew and gathered and swelled into one great rush, as they all came together in the Rue St Jacques and surged towards the great gate.

The burghers of St Germain's and the inhabitants of the newly-building Terre de Laas on the west, the burghers of St Marcel and St Victor on the south and east, came trooping in by lateral gates, still further contributing to the confused mass of clerks and friars, monks and University officials, boys, women, men and girls, that was gathering with such great good humour to welcome the Kings of England, France and Navarre.

From the four quarters of the City proper a smaller crowd was coming together at the head of the wooden bridge. This was distinctly a courtly and ecclesiastical assembly, more brilliant in colour and more grave in feature than that at the Porte Papale. Here were the officials of the Old Palace who had not gone in the train of King Louis to meet King Henry at Chartres. Here was the Archbishop, with the Chapter of his Cathedral, the Cardinal Dean of the Church of Paris and the Cantor, the three Archdeacons, the sub-Cantor, the Chancellor, the Penitentiary and forty-three of the fifty-two Prebendaries of Notre Dame, each clothed in the rich ecclesiastical garments that belonged to his particular rank and station.

Besides this gorgeous nucleus, standing together in a

compact body of rich colour, there were other dignitaries. Four or five Bishops with their attendants, a number of Abbots and Priors of the various orders, in white or black habits, and monks were scattered about in little groups.

The Prior of the Temple, at the head of a little band of his knights, rode up into a conspicuous position.

A metal crucifix gleamed in the sun's rays high above the crowd, and in front of the choir of singing-boys and men in their white surplices were two lads carrying respectively a vessel of holy water with the aspergillum and a smoking thurible.

They were not so noisy as the crowd at the Porte Papale ; but they were conversing and chatting, none the less, as they waited to receive the royal party and conduct the kings to the Cathedral.

A third gathering, of considerably larger dimensions than either of the former, had collected in front of the Grand Châtelet. It was composed of the burghers—citizens, merchants, traders, Jews, apprentices and master craftsmen, with their wives and daughters ; together with a fair sprinkling of country men and women who had come in through the Town gates to see the pageant.

While this crowd could not boast the select magnificence of the ecclesiastical gathering upon the Island, nor all the festive youth of the University contingent, it made up for what it lacked by the motley variety of dress and feature that it displayed. All the trades—though the trade guilds had not yet been formed by the Provost Stephen Boileau—were represented ; for all the Town of Paris was gathered together at the Grand Châtelet and in its vicinity. Those who came late had to be content with a place in the Place de Grève or by the Porte Pepin. Dogs were barking and

children wild with excitement and delight. Proud mothers rocked their screaming babies in their arms and lifted them up to see the pretty crowd—a proceeding that made them scream all the more.

The Provost of the merchants, with his subordinate officers, was there, solemn and dignified in his dress of state, frowning at the screaming children, fussing with the hang of his robes, bestowing a smile now and again upon some prominent member of his little kingdom, conscious of his own importance.

There was a continuous buzz of talk, howling, barking, stamping, shuffling, movement. Those who had had the forethought to bring food were rapidly disposing of it with laughter and jokes, to the envy of their less provident neighbours.

The sun played upon the concourse, bringing the patchwork of colour out in strong light; yellow and red, and blue and green; furs and cloth, with silks here and there, and ornament of silver and ornament of gold; tall hats and low coifs, and wimples and flat bonnets; talking and laughter and snatches of song; garland and green bough and tapestry hanging from the windows. This was the assembly of the burghers in front of the Grand Châtelet, waiting to meet their sovereign Lord and Master and his royal guest, Henry III., King of England.

But to return to the gathering at the Porte Papale. Arnoul had taken his stand near the gate, in the centre of a little group of his friends. As he looked round him at the vast concourse coming together from every side, he saw the strangest collection of gala dresses imaginable. There were the Procurators of the Four Nations standing apart, with their Attorneys, and the beadles waiting to collect the scholars into orderly

bands. There was a white-robed group of Premonstratensians, headed by their Abbot, from the convent in the Rue Hautefeuille, and a brown group of Cordeliers with their sandals and knotted cords. There were the friars from St Jacques with their black cloaks, and the Carmelites beside them in their white ones; and near by stood a rank of Bernardines from the Abbey beyond the Bièvre. Arnoul recognised the two Buckfast brothers in this last group.

And then there were the scholars—tens of thousands of them, it seemed to him—in every conceivable variety of cassock and habit, going in and out among the compact groups of the religious, surging backwards and forwards towards the flower-bedecked gate, pushing, shoving, laughing, calling out, shouting to each other, waving the branches and the bunches of flowers they held in their hands high above their heads.

They were a jolly crowd, these scholars of the Four Nations, ready for any emergency, but doubly ready to welcome kings. They would turn out in their thousands for a funeral, or for a feast, and swell the ranks of a procession so that when its head was entering Notre Dame its tail was still forming itself at St Mathurin's. But it was not every day in the year that they had a chance like this! And so, remembering their importance and their privileges, they shouted themselves hoarse, and waved their green branches and bright-coloured cloaks, when they had them, and pushed and jostled each other in high good humour, singing snatches of the songs with which, roaring their loudest in chorus, they would welcome the royal train as soon as it should come into sight.

The Nations were slowly sorting themselves out of the general confusion and beginning to group them-

selves in the rear of their Procurators, when a strident voice broke in upon the clamour and babel of tongues.

“Room! Make room there for the Rector! Room for the Deans! Room for the Professors of the University!”

The crowd parted right and left, as the splendidly robed procession of University officials made its way, preceded by the beadles, from the University Church of St Mathurin. There was the Rector himself—the Englishman, John of Gecteville—and lusty cheers rang out for him from English throats as he advanced, gorgeous in his rectorial robes, at the head of the professorial body. In the University he had precedence over bishops and cardinals, and even papal legates; and scholars, masters, monks and friars—though the Four Nations had elected him from among the artists and had made him what he was, the *Capital Scholarum*—gave way before him as he passed onward to the gate.

Then there were the Syndic, the Deans and the Doctors of the Faculties; the twelve theologians walking in front in their ermine tippets and with their doctors’ bonnets upon their heads. After them came the Scholasticus of Ste Geneviève in his canon’s robes, severe of visage and mien as one who sat with the Chancellor of Notre Dame for the examinations of the University teachers.

Robert de Sorbon was there too, and the two Dominican professors. And then, as the many eyes of the throng watched the passage of the official body, the well-known figure of St Amour came into sight.

There he was; the thin, angular face, almost ascetic in its fierce compression and energy; the high forehead with the pencilled brows slightly contracted, as they always were, giving him a habitual air of pride and

obstinacy; those dark and gleaming eyes, shining with intelligence and audacity. Clad in his doctors' robes of cloth and fur, he walked straight along the path made before him through the crowd, looking neither to the right nor left, as though seeing nothing of all the people whose eyes were bent upon him. A Dominican friar spoke under his breath when he had passed, calling him blasphemer, mocker, reviler, and consigning him, with all his party, to the depths of the nether pit. And then, the procession past, the crowd surged together again.

Arnoul caught scraps of conversation as he threaded his way through the press to take up his stand in the ranks of the English, to whom the first place, near the gate, was allotted.

"They say"—it was a Franciscan speaking—"that the King of the English has translated his mother—whom may God assoil!—into the Church at Fontevraud."

"That is true," answered a brother standing by. "That was before he sent envoys to the King. I saw it myself; and I held a lighted taper in my hand as the body of Isabella was borne from the graveyard. It was a right pious deed."

"And Henry was ill at the time," pursued the first speaker.

"He was suffering," the second made answer. "Therefore he went on pilgrimage from Fontevraud to Pontigny, where is the tomb and shrine of the holy Bishop St Edmund, to whom the King made vows and many precious gifts for the grace of health."

"And he received that for which he prayed?"

"Of a certainty! Was not St Edmund an Englishman also? You shall see him this day in the vigour of his health such as he. . . ." But the rest of the sentence was lost to him.

The ranks were fairly drawn into order by now. Nations, religious orders, scholars and masters were separated off from each other into groups, waiting for the signal to begin their songs of welcome and drop into line in the procession that was to escort the royal cavalcade through the University. In the windows that overhung the great gathering all the length of the long street, women in bright-coloured garments had taken up their station. Their eager faces were framed, as it were, in floral wreaths. Tapestries and velvets flaunted in the breeze.

And then the bells of Notre Dame des Champs began to ring in the distance—the appointed signal of the approach. The crowd surged to and fro, everyone straining eyes along the dusty road. At last the royal horsemen came in sight; and as the kings, riding abreast, passed through the gate, shout after shout welcomed them; and the ringing voices of the scholars joined in one vast unison of song.

So the kings passed, with their queens and escorts, with compliment and singing and smiles, and to the accompaniment of the shouting of their most loyal subjects, the scholars of Paris, through the Porte Papale and on to the City.

King Louis had put on again the silks and velvets, the scarlet and the gold, the furs and jewels, that he had laid aside on his return from Damietta, and rode beside his royal brother, splendid in his noble grace and carriage. King Henry rode, smiling, at his right. After them came the long train of nobles, the two sisters, Queens of France and England, the chaplains, bishops, abbots, esquires, monks and serving-men, who made up their following. And with the English Nation going before, and the rest of the University following behind,

with prancing horses trapped out in purple and scarlet velvet, and in cloth of gold, with jangling bits and armoured knights and retainers, with festoons of flowers on either hand and above their heads, amid the tramp of twenty thousand feet and the singing of ten thousand voices, and the strains of music and the clash of bells, they passed out of the domain of the University into the domain of the Church of Paris, lying with its cincture of silvery water beneath the shadow of Notre Dame.

At the bridge-head the royalties were received by the ecclesiastical body, cardinals, bishops and canons, and conducted with great solemnity to the church. Most of the scholars had turned back at the Petit Pont, resolved to spend the day and night in celebrations and carousals at home; but Arnoul with many of his compatriots followed in the wake of the kings and their court. The nave of the great cathedral church was filled to overflowing with the throng, and there was little to see over the heads of the people from where he stood. The solemn chanting that had taken the place of the scholars' singing continued until the procession ceased to move, and the blue incense clouds rose in the far distance in front of the High Altar. People beside him were craning their necks and whispering, so that it was impossible for him to hear, any more than see, what was going on at the other end of the grey-arched church. But he listened and gathered information from those who spoke around him.

The King had chosen the Old Temple for his place of residence. It was big enough, surely; for it was capable of housing the general chapter of the knights when they met. And Louis would remain in his palace in the

City. He had made offer of it to King Henry. There was to be a great feast for the poor at the Temple on the following day. Quantities of fish and flesh had already been commanded, and the wine-sellers had been carting heaven knew how many skins up to the Temple. The King was to visit the Sainte Chapelle. He had a great devotion to the saints. The relics there were wonderful and without number ; besides, there was the Crown of Thorns. He would give gifts, most like, as at Pontigny.

So they chatted and speculated until, the brief service over, they surged out of the cathedral again.

The royal train mounted and rode off in the direction of the Pont au Change. But the press in the narrow streets was becoming excessive, and the sun was hot. Arnoul, hearing rather than seeing the enormous throng waiting on the other side of the Grand Châtelet, made his way out of the crowd and turned back towards the University.

South of the river all was in an uproar. The monks and friars had prudently retired into their cloisters, and there was no sign of the governing body in the streets. The scholars were rushing about shouting and singing, where they had not already taken to the dice or drinking ; and in some quarters the various Nations were coming into conflict. But after all, seeing that it was a feast day of unparalleled magnificence, it went quietly enough for the University of Paris until nightfall, when lamps were lighted in the windows and at the street corners, and the scholars brought out the thousands of candles with which they had provided themselves. And then ensued scenes of wildest confusion and indescribable horseplay in both Town and University. In the flickering light from the guttering candles, clerks and

citizens, men and women, boys and girls, danced and sang, and drank and shouted. All the day long in the City, "so marvellously adorned, in joy and singing, with flowers, and all kinds of pomps and exulting," had they rejoiced. And all through the night and the next day did they continue their revelry and riot; until, thoroughly sated with the pleasure and fatigue of their feasting, they quieted down again into something approaching the usual state.

Arnoul reached his lodging well towards evening, fatigued with the heat and excitement of the long day. But he had no intention of remaining there by himself while there was so much going on outside. He had a mouthful of food and rearranged his dress, dusty and disordered by the day's jostling. Then, catching up the candles he had got ready, he descended the long flight of stairs and let himself out into the street.

It was good to be alive, he thought; good to be plunged into this seething cauldron of life, actual and intense. The rush and the excitement of the day had got into his blood, his heart, his brain. He was ready to rush into the thickest of the crowd, to assert himself, to do as they did—and more. For an instant, the thought of Guy and of Sibilla flashed upon him. His own great projects floated luminous before his mind. But he resolutely turned away from them. What were they, after all? Life was now! now! now! He would live now with the rest! What was the use of trying to coop himself up in a stereotyped form of prejudice and constraint, when the hot blood of youth was running pulsing through his veins? His senses and imagination were stimulated to fierce action by all the events of the day. His brain whirled in a fantastic dance of passions let loose. He saw all things through a rosy haze and

glamour that enchanted him. The very smoke from the guttering tapers, the reek of wine, the hot breath, swept across his nostrils as a sweet perfume; and he drank it in, exulting that he was alive. It was the present that mattered—not the future! What a fool he had been not to see it all before as he saw it now! Why had he let indistinct thoughts of the Abbot or of Guy sap his vitality as he had done? No! This was life and he should live it to the full! He was his own master! There was no one to gainsay him!

He made his way to the accustomed tavern. Faces leered and smiled at him as he passed. The guttering flames threw strange, distorting shadows over them. And he smiled back, with joke and answering coarseness. These people were living too; and they knew the value of life—wine and dancing and song! How gay they all were—and how happy! Yes, they were right and the old monks wrong. The true life was to enjoy oneself now—without thought for the morrow. How was it he had never realised it before? The blood surged through his veins, and the unloosed phantoms of passion made riot in his brain. He pushed the low door open and entered, calling loudly to Julien for wine. His voice drew all eyes towards the door, where he stood erect, as if almost conscious of his own beauty, with head thrown back and hair falling backwards from his temples. His cheeks were glowing and his eyes sparkling with an unusual fire.

Maitre Louis, playing with two of the scholars and the shoemaker, was in the act of throwing the dice. Jeannette, Thomassine and others were watching the game. As with one consent, they made room for him at the table. He staked and threw in his turn—and won. Whenever it came to him to throw he won.

Jeannette was leaning over his shoulder now, looking on. Her warm breath fanned his cheek. A wisp of her hair touched his brow. This was life and living! To win at a throw of the dice, and quaff the ruby wine, and hear Jeannette whispering in his ear! If Maitre Jacques were there, he might say what he would; Arnoul would not resent it. For he was alive and thrilling to the finger tips with the full joy of living. What was King Louis in the Old Palace, even now in the act of exchanging his scarlet velvet for rough grey wool?—He had not the secret of life. And who was Henry, holding his gallant court in the Temple, compared to him? A delicious sense of warmth crept over his faculties as the wine flowed. The scent of flowers stole in upon him, the flowers that Jeannette had carried when the procession passed. The singing and the monotonous noise of dancing in the street came subdued through the closed door, and soothed him. But, above all, the feeling that he had thrown off all bonds of restraint, that he was living for the moment—living fully, passionately, recklessly—bathed him in an exquisite sense of personal completeness. He was in a sort of ecstasy of self-assertion, giving the fullest rein to his emotions, sinking his reason beneath a wave of sense. He had clean forgotten all the past. There was no Sir Guy at Woodleigh, no Sibilla, no Abbey! There was only Jeannette leaning on his shoulder, and Louis opposite him, and old Julien serving the wine! This was to be alive!

As the hours sped, lawyer Jacques made his appearance with Aales. He looked the worse for his rough usage, but he said nothing to Arnoul until the wine had loosened his tongue. Then he began, as before, to make insulting jests. But the boy answered him with

coarser repartee, turning towards Jeannette to watch the effect of his words. She blushed and smiled, nodding her head at the discomfiture of Maitre Jacques; for she was used to the language of taverns and made no pretence at being shocked. Besides, she admired this great, strapping Englishman, who was so strong and handsome; and it was a pleasure to hear him speaking in language that she best understood.

Jacques himself was surprised. He had no doubt wanted to pick a quarrel when he was prepared for it. He grumbled and muttered under his breath to Aales, looking spitefully out of his little ferret eyes at Arnoul, until the dice box was thrown aside, and, with a final cup of wine, the party broke up.

Louis and Arnoul, with the two girls, went out into the crowded street.

CHAPTER XV

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

WHILE the events recorded in the preceding chapters were taking place, while Paris was living its gay and roystering life, while doctors were busy with their bitter disputes, and students ready with practical illustrations of the teaching of their masters, while the character of Maitre Arnoul the Englishman, as he had come to be called, was developing and shaping itself by its contact with the lives of his associates, it must not be supposed that his Devon friends had forgotten the lad who had passed from their midst and set out with the Lord Abbot for the famous schools of the French capital. On the contrary, there were few indeed at Buckfast or at Woodleigh who did not often call to mind the good-humoured, handsome boy who had been so universal a favourite with them all.

First and foremost there was the parish priest, Sir Guy, who, now that his dreams seemed to be actually on the way towards realisation, always thought and spoke of his younger brother as "My brother, the clerk of Paris"; as if such a mystic formula of words naturally conveyed to his hearers—as indeed it did, with a corresponding glow of satisfaction, to his own mind—the limitless height of possibilities to which, in this case at least, such a clerkship was inevitably bound to lead. His brother's pride in Arnoul was not to be measured by any ordinary standards. If he was aware of any weaknesses or defects in the lad's character, for him at

least they were virtues which, in the long run, would manifest themselves to his advantage ; and the good points that everyone who knew him at all, from Abbot Benet to Roger the fisherman, would have been only too ready to attest, became for simple, fond Sir Guy the very summits, the mountain peaks, of excellence such as are reached by few, if indeed by any, mortals in this imperfect world.

As the weeks and months drew out, Guy, not having Arnoul near him to advise, forgot that there was any subject upon which his advice might have been necessary or useful ; and, dwelling on the end rather than upon the means, he pictured Arnoul already in his doctor's cap, coming back triumphantly to his home to accept the honours and dignities that would be sure to be thrust lavishly upon him. So Sir Guy dreamed and built airy castles for Arnoul to live in, the while the lad, as we have seen, was going to the bad just about as quickly as circumstances would permit. But then Sir Guy knew little or nothing of Paris and his brother's doings there ; and so he dreamed on, happy in his ignorance, of the glorious career that would bring wealth and honour to them both.

The Abbot, too, had Arnoul often in his thoughts. He knew what sort of a place Paris was far better than Sir Guy ; and he realised, as few but monks can realise, what its difficulties and dangers were. But he had the utmost confidence in his own judgment and he had also the utmost confidence in Arnoul. It did not need his seeing him, as he passed through Paris on his yearly visit to Citeaux, to be sure that all things were well with him. Had he not had the lad in his own keeping while he was in the aluminate ? and, if need might be,

were there not the Cistercians at Paris for Arnoul to consult if any difficulty should arise? No: he did not worry; for he was so sure of the boy. Which shows, perhaps, that even a monk and an abbot may be mistaken in his reading of a character that he thinks he understands.

Budd, of course, and his good dame had frequent speech with regard to the "young master." Like Sir Guy and Abbot Benet, they missed his presence sorely—perhaps more, in their simple way, than either of the priests. Paris, for them, notwithstanding all that Arnoul had poured into their ears about it, was little more than a name; but they knew that he was there to gain learning and advancement, and with Sir Guy they harped always on the day when he should come back to Devon possessed of both.

But there was another who was interested in Arnoul and his doings; who, though she spoke of him seldom, if at all, had him in her thoughts none the less often. This was the Lady Sibilla, the daughter of Sir Sigar Vipont. Her life, until Arnoul came into it in the manner already narrated, had been a quiet one and uneventful. She had lived happily with her father at Moreleigh, troubled only by his fits of depression and moroseness, until the memorable day on which he had lifted his hand against her. Then a whole series of new factors had come into play. It was not that she loved her father any the less. Her blind devotion to him was as great and, if anything, more tender than ever before; but a touch of sadness had crept in to colour it. The outburst had brought Vipont to his senses for a time at any rate, and he was lavish in atoning for it by every means in his power. Still Sibilla could not forget—

though she never needed to forgive—the awful scene and the fact, so wounding to her pride, that servants and strangers had been witnesses of it. Even had she been able to forget, she would have been reminded of it every time she saw the priest of Woodleigh ; for he, good, blundering soul, who would have cut off his right hand sooner than willingly cause pain to any living creature, asked her the most pointed questions of Sir Sigar every time he saw her. Then there was Arnoul. As the days passed, after he had left England, she found herself thinking more and more often of her chivalrous protector. His image had burnt itself deep upon her memory—his strong, shapely form, his noble brow, his thoughtful eyes. How handsome he was ! How strong ! How gentle ! She had fallen in love with him as a matter of course, after the manner of people in the story books, though she did not know it. It was only after she discovered that his memory was ever growing more present to her and dearer, that she began to realise how he had gone to Paris taking with him something more than her precious relic in its golden reliquary.

When she confessed her love to herself in the silence of her own chamber, the hot blushes rushed mantling to her cheek. How noble he was, and true, and brave ! There was no epithet too high or noble for him—no word to express the halo of romance with which she clothed him. He was her knight ! He had her gage ! And she was his lady, for whom he would do battle ! What mattered that the golden sun shone bright outside her window ? What mattered the blue dome of sky closing in the mellow coombs that swelled from the bosom of the earth to meet it ? A single kestrel hawk hung poised in mid heaven. Beneath, in the cool, green woodland, a dove called to its answering mate. The

pages chattered in the court below. The clank of steel came up shrilly from the guard-room. She could hear the whirr of the spinning-wheels in the women's chamber. But she closed her great brown eyes and thought of Arnoul de Valletort, breathing his name softly and many times over to herself. She could understand, now, the beating of her heart when she had spoken to him at the castle gate and had bound her guerdon about his throat. It was love—the first stirrings of the spark divine within her breast, now fanned into a flame by the dear breath of memory. It was love, the more precious to her in that it was hers and hers alone; shared with no soul, no, not even with his. And when her cavalier should return, his days of learning over, then fate should weave their two lives together in one enduring strand; just as fate had first brought them into touch and set her heart on fire.

When would he come back—and what? Sibilla began to speculate and dream her dreams like Sir Guy. He would come back to her, not an ecclesiastic, but a doughty knight; and after a stately and honourable wooing, he would lead her to the altar. He would return with honour and renown to win back his patrimony or found a great estate for himself in the country of his birth.

Or if he came back poor as he had gone, what mattered it? Poverty was no barrier that true love could not overleap. Only—her one fear—Sir Guy spoke of his clerkship as if Arnoul were already in sacred orders and bound with the clerical vows. But she trusted her instinct more than Sir Guy's glowing hopes and put her faith into the keeping of her own true heart.

And so Sibilla spun her romance into the texture of

her quiet life at Moreleigh, and dreamed daydreams until her cheeks began to grow so pale and her manner so pensive that her father took notice of it. He attributed it to his outburst of rage as to a cause and spoke to her of it in his rough, kind way.

"What ails you, child?" he said to her one day. "The roses are fading from your cheeks with the fading petals in the gardens. You are sad, Sibilla, and grieving. Nay, tell me not, child—" as she made to answer him: and there was bitterness in his tone as he spoke, though his great hand rested lovingly upon her little one. "Tell me not, for I know the cause. I do not blame you, child. I do not blame you; but—but—cannot you forget?"

"Father, father," she interrupted him, the tears starting to her eyes. "You know I have forgotten, save when you recall it to me thus. Forgotten? Is there anything that could stand between us? Oh, father, you wrong my love for you in thinking so! You dishonour your own love for me!"

"Still, Sibilla, you are not well. Some secret trouble . . . ?"

"No, father, it is nothing. I am quite well. Believe me, I am well." She drew herself up to her full height, so that the clinging gown she wore fell in graceful folds from her shoulders to the ground. Her head was thrown back as she smiled into his eyes, the lights dancing in the corners of her own, and the fresh colour showing upon her cheeks. Her bosom gleamed like faint blushing ivory kissed by the sun where the pale green silk was cut away at the throat. A narrow circlet of dull gold was clasped about her neck.

"Ah! That is something like my Sibilla! Now you look as I would have you always look, happy,

careless, fearless, as of old! But one can see," he continued, "how pale you have become lately, and how serious, none the less. You are not the same light-hearted girl you were, Sibilla. You are sure that there is nothing?"

"Nothing, father," she repeated, smiling up at him again, and blushing in spite of herself.

He saw the smile and the blush, and kissed her gravely upon the brow. She returned his embrace, putting her soft arms around his neck. "Now will you believe me, father?" she said.

"Believe you? Yes, child, of course I believe you. Why, your two eyes shine like twin stars, my Sibilla! Your lips are the very bow of Cupid! One might think you were in love to look at you, so does the lovelight shine in your eyes! Who is it, child?" he asked in banter, stumbling by chance upon her secret. "Surely my child, my bird, my pretty Sibilla, has not given away her heart!"

"Father!" she exclaimed, blushing furiously, and averting her face.

"Ah! So I have found you out, little one!" He smiled in jest, half divining the truth. "And who is the happy suitor that aspires to the hand of the heiress of the Viponts? Come, Sibilla! Who is it? Young Clifford? Tracy? Why, what a quiet minx you are to fall in love without telling your doting father all about it!"

"Father! How can you!" cried the girl, now on the verge of tears again, her bosom swelling with emotion. "I have never spoken of love to a single soul! Father! How can you say such things! No one has ever made love to me—no one!" And Sibilla stood proudly on her dignity and looked at her father with flashing eyes.

"Come, Sibilla, come! Do not be angry! One of these days it will have to be, and then you will not speak like that," he said sadly. "And maids do lose their hearts; in truth they do! Why, your mother—God assoil her! . . . But there is someone, child, whom you have seen . . . ?"

Was it maidenly, thought the girl quickly—was it consistent with the pride of the Viponts? What would her father say if she did tell him? There was no reason why she should not keep her secret safely locked up in the innermost shrine of her own heart. No one knew. No one need ever know. It was hers and hers alone, a thing unshared and incommunicable.

But as a counterbalance to this thought there was another. When a maid loves truly—or a man, for the matter of that—there is a comfort, a solace and a pride in speaking of the object of the love, in confessing to a real passion. She had no mother, poor maid, to confide in; and she loved her father dearly. Never before had she had secrets from him. Why should she hide this? She was not ashamed of her growing love for Arnoul.

Rather was she proud of it—proud with that blind, unreasoning pride that is love itself, wrapping the loved one in a glamour of perfection, like a saint in his sanctity, intangible and unassailable.

She made up her mind suddenly, unsuspectingly, without misgiving.

"Yes, father, you have guessed rightly. There is someone."

"Young Tracy, Sibilla? Pomeroy? Clifford?" Vipont named houses of Devon fame, assured position, great estates.

"No, father, it is none of those," replied the girl,

quietly, her downcast eyes seeking a refuge from her father's searching glance.

"Who then? Bauzan? Surely not! He is too old—and too ugly." He ended with a laugh.

"No, none of those." The long lashes swept her cheeks. "It is the brother of Sir Guy of Woodleigh, Arnoul de Valletort, whom I love."

"What!" gasped Vipont, almost speechless with astonishment. "Sibilla, Sibilla, what are you saying? Arnoul de Valletort! The boy has not an acre of land to boast of! Come, girl, what madness is this?"

"It is no madness, father, but the simple truth. God help me! I know not that he even cares for me: but—I confess it!—I love him with all my heart and soul."

"By the wounds of God, girl!" retorted Vipont, fast working himself into a passion. "Have you no modesty? Have you no pride? Have you no shame? A Vipont and a beggarly Valletort mated! Faugh! My gorge rises at it! A Vipont—and my daughter! The younger brother of a fallen house—the brother of the shaveling priest of Woodleigh! Are you mad, girl? Have you lost your senses?"

"You asked me, father," the girl answered, pale and trembling. It was much harder than she thought. The confession was not enough; she must also defend her new-born love. "You asked me, father, and I have answered you. I have told you what my lips would reveal to no one else. Arnoul de Valletort claims as good a lineage as we. I see no madness in such love; nor do I feel in aught ashamed."

"But he is a beggar!"

"Is there naught but gold to think of in the world?" asked the girl bitterly, lifting her swimming eyes to his.

"I will not hear of such a thing!" stormed Vipont, the danger signals of rage swelling red upon his brow. "My daughter shall not think such thoughts. Have done with it, girl! A beggar and, they say, a clerk! Let your modesty spare you shame! This Valletort is half a monk! Besides, he does not love you! He cannot love you! He has not dared—has he?—to whisper to you of love."

"Ah!" Sibilla sighed. "You have asked me, father; and I have answered you truly. I love Arnoul, come what may. He has not spoken to me. He may never speak. For aught I know, he does not look on me with love. . . ."

The man swore a dreadful oath. "I will not hear of it," he shouted. "I forbid you to speak . . . to think, of such a thing! No daughter of mine"—and he raised his hand threateningly—"No daughter of mine shall so demean herself! Shall, do I say? You have demeaned yourself already and dragged your honour in the dust in making such a shameless boast. God's blood! Would you go to him upon your knees and beseech his condescension?"

"Father!" exclaimed the girl pleadingly. "Father! Remember, I beseech you!"

It was enough. The man's visage paled suddenly, and his hand dropped to his side. He had been within an ace of striking her. For a moment he stood silent; then, the pent-up wrath choking his voice, he spoke.

"Forgive me, Sibilla; but do not goad me too far. Forbearance has reached its snapping point. Such words as you have spoken are enough to stir my rage to very madness. I forbid . . . I utterly forbid these thoughts of Valletort. And if the churl should dare to raise his eyes to you, I shall send him—I swear it on

my faith!—to join his forebears in hell. But he will never dare! Such thoughts are unmaidenly in you, Sibilla. Put them from you! When the time comes for you to marry—when it comes, I say—I will find you a suitor. But this Valletort. . . . Blood of God! I will not have you think of him!”

The girl stood white and trembling. Vipont's forced calmness was worse than his anger. Still she made answer.

“Father, in all I can I will obey you. It is not from fear but from love that I have never disobeyed you yet. But I cannot do this thing! I cannot promise! It is not in my power! How can I love when you bid me love, or hate when you bid me hate? I would never do aught against your will; but as well might I bid the wind to cease from singing through the leaves as bid my heart not to love!”

“Then you are no daughter of mine,” replied Vipont in the same cold voice, shaking with suppressed passion. “I forbid you to love this Valletort whelp, Sibilla! Mark you, I forbid this! You will forget it as a passing fancy. I, your father, command you!”

And, fearful of himself, he turned on his heel and left her.

The poor child burst into tears. It was hard enough to tell her father of her love—far worse that he should take it like this. Oh, why—she wondered—should affection have come thus into her heart? Why should it grow to be a part of herself? Why should she love at all? She found no answer; for there is none. So she dried her eyes after a time and went to her women, suffering silently, swayed hither and thither by the cross purposes of her heart. Yet, such is the waywardness of human nature, from that day her love for Arnoul grew

ever greater, and her presentiment of its ultimate fruition more strong and certain. And from that day her heart was happy with a serene happiness and proud with a glorious pride, as having raised her maiden love above all other things so high that she could bring herself to boast of it in the very teeth of her father's displeasure.

CHAPTER XVI

ARNOUL LOOKS INTO THE FUTURE

HAVING once asserted himself in the manner described in a previous chapter, having shaken off the trammels in which his memory of the past had bound him, and poured out the anodyne of excitement and sensible pleasure upon his conscience, Arnoul found it easy to pursue his new course. Not that he had no misgivings; but he managed to find palliating circumstances, if not positive arguments against them, in some of the scraps of learning that he had picked up. And certainly the whole spirit of the party to which he had attached himself was calculated to encourage him. For it was a spirit of personal liking or whim as against authority of any kind, of criticism opposed to obedience, and pride of intellect against humility of soul. Logically pursued, it ended no one could quite tell where. Adopting its unspoken principles, Arnoul pushed them for himself to their practical conclusions. He was his own master. So he practically gave up going to any lectures at all, unless he hoped for some brilliant display of dialectic that might add to his morbid love of excitement.

King Henry had left Paris for Boulogne, after having spent something over a week in visiting the principal sights that the City had to show. There had been a great dinner given in the enormous Royal Hall of the Old Temple. It was the talk of the University as well as of the Town. The three kings had been seated

together, Henry giving place to Louis, and taking his seat on his right hand, while the King of Navarre sat upon his left. Then came twenty-five dignitaries, several of them dukes, and twelve bishops seated with the barons. It was remarked that some of the bishops were placed among the dukes. Eighteen countesses—among them Sanchia, Countess of Cornwall, who with a great train of nobles and gentlemen had come over from England to meet her royal sisters, and the Countesses of Anjou and Provence, with their mother, Beatrice—had their seats at the board. And there was an innumerable company of knights. The hall was hung with tapestry, and the shields of the order were displayed upon the walls. Moreover it was a fish day.

These things did not prove of much interest to Arnoul, who had other and more pressing affairs on hand now to occupy him. There was Maitre Barthelemy, for instance, and Jeannette. Also there was Ben Israel. He had—he must not forget it—to raise some ready money. He had an appointment to meet Barthelemy beyond the Château de Vauvert that very day. Well, he would keep it, but he must see Jeannette first. Barthelemy was a strange man, to be sure! What had he meant by saying that he read fortune and advancement in the lines of his face? And what was all the jargon about the numbers? Perhaps he would learn that afternoon when he went with Louis.

It was early when they set out, so as to be back in time before the gates were closed. They followed the road along the Clos des Francs Murcaux and passed Notre Dame des Champs, lying snugly amidst its smiling fields. Through the spaces in the trees the haunted Château showed upon their right. Then they made a long detour and found themselves behind the

triangular enclosure of the Château, and standing before a low building of rough stone and plaster that was almost entirely hidden among the trees. The house is not marked on the plan of Charles V., neither does it figure upon the earlier one of the time of Philip Augustus. Either it was built some time between the two dates, or, what was more likely, it was so unimportant a dependency of one of the great establishments of Paris that it only had its existence indicated in the musty title deeds of the land upon which it stood. But, whatever was the case, certain it was that up to the year 1257 it was the habitation and the laboratory of Maître Barthelemy, clerk, alchemist, and astrologist.

The wooden door opened slightly to Louis' low knock, and the enormous, egg-shaped head of the occupant of the hut appeared at the aperture. Seeing who it was that demanded admission, he opened the door wider and bade them enter. He closed it again and barred it with a heavy wooden beam, as soon as the two clerks were within.

A singularly unpleasant and acrid odour filled the building. It came, apparently, from a pot, or kettle, that was seething and steaming over a fire in the corner. When the lads became accustomed to the semi-darkness of the room, they were able to take notice of some of the furniture it contained. It was a fearsome medley. On a large table, standing in the centre under an aperture in the roof that was partially closed with a thick, dressed sheepskin, was pinned down a large parchment covered with mysterious drawings. A rough pair of compasses lay upon it; and ranged beside these were an empty crucible, two phials full of some dark liquid, a human skull, and a flat dish containing a heap of yellow powder. From

perches sticking out into the room at all angles and heights from the floor hung bunches of dried herbs and roots, skins, bones, and little parchment packets sealed and labelled—the entire paraphernalia of a magician's stock in trade. In a conspicuous position hung what looked not unlike a withered and shrivelled hand. It was, so Louis whispered with awe to Arnoul, a mandrake, possessed of strange qualities and mystical properties. And everywhere on the floor were vessels filled with powders and liquids, unwholesome-looking masses of spongy subsistence, crucibles, alembics, retorts. The owner of this strange collection stepped about cautiously among the crucibles, looking not unlike a great cat as he picked his way to the fire and gave the pot a stir with a wooden ladle. He was still clad in rusty black, and in the half light looked more solemn and serious than ever. He motioned his visitors to a seat and, having sniffed suspiciously at the stench coming from his brew, came gingerly over to the table and stood beside them, looking down upon the parchment.

“I have prepared,” he whispered, modulating his nasal voice to a purring tone in keeping with his mysterious surroundings—“I have prepared a scheme of the nativity of our good friend Maitre Arnoul. It is as I foresaw. His orb is without doubt in conjunction with the most potent Mercurius which, according to the teaching of the divine Pythagoras, is a name of the Tetrad. And Mercurius is but a semitonium from both Luna and Venus, from which is to be read a dissonance in the harmony of the celestial spheres. But Tetractys is also—as says Aristotle in his *Ethics*—Impetuosity, Most Strong, Bacchus, and Masculine. And Plutarch hath it that it signifies the soul; for, says he, it consists of Mind, Science, Opinion, and Sense.”

“For the love of God!” whispered Arnoul to his companion. “What does the sage mean?”

“Hush!” That was all the reply Maitre Louis deigned to give. Barthelemy went on unheeding.

“The Tetractys is the mean betwixt the Monad and the Heptad, equally exceeding and equally exceeded in number.”

Arnoul could stand it no longer. “Maitre!” he called out to the astrologer. “What is the meaning of these strange words? I do not understand! I cannot comprehend! What is the Monad? I have never heard of a Tetrac. . . . What is it?”

“You should not interrupt me,” said Maitre Barthelemy solemnly. “In mystic rites the pupil and the worshipper should hold himself in a state of reverence and awe. It is so prescribed! The words I use have mystical power and may not be changed. However, a part I may reveal for your weakness. Know that the Monad is the unit of all number. The sublime Tetractys is the number four. The Hebdomad is that below the octave, or eight; and the Decad is ten—the beginning of a reborn series.

“I proceed with my prognostication. The Monad being the mother of all numbers is continent of all the powers; and the Hebdomad, motherless and a virgin, possesseth the second place in dignity, since it is not composed of any number within the Decad. Therefore, since the Tetrad, or Tetractys, lies the mean between the unbegotten Monad and the motherless Hebdomad, it thus comprehends all powers, both of produced and of productive numbers——”

At this point in the learned exposition of his art, the pot in the corner began to bubble furiously and boil over, the liquid, as it fell upon the coals beneath, igni-

ting in pale blue spurts and flashes. The alchemist hurriedly dropped the compasses, with which he had been measuring distances upon the parchment, and, interrupting his speech, made for the corner. He lifted the heavy vessel from the fire; and, setting it down on the floor, began again to stir it with his ladle. The fumes were filling the chamber with an abominable odour. Arnoul was choking, and the tears were starting to Louis' eyes. But Maitre Barthelemy did not seem to notice it, and continued from where he stood, bending over the vessel and stirring the unwholesome contents.

"Your life, young sir, is cast in the Church. You will come to great dignity and high honours such as few ever reach. You are a clerk of Paris?"

Arnoul answered in the affirmative, rubbing his smarting eyes the while with the back of his hand.

"And of England?"

"From Devon," coughed the boy.

"Good! Your advance lies in England. It is there that the starry harmony will most resound. It is so written in the heavens. Are you yet a bachelor?"

"No. I am only a scholar. As yet I but follow the readers in the schools."

"Never mind," said the man, straightening himself again. "What is to be will be. It is written in the stars. You will come to a canonry at least, or a bishopric. Perhaps you will even rise to the sacred purple." He laughed a dry, sarcastic laugh as he spoke, and again bent over the cauldron. "But there is death written too," he muttered to himself. "Death violent and sudden. Death creeping up behind, wreathed in the gay flowers of life. And for whom? The stars say not. It may be for him. . . . May be for me. Shall

I pour the lifeless water into the globe and make him see? Shall I force his eyes to pierce the veil of destiny and read the future that is to be—nay, that already is. . .? Or shall I summon the spirits to my aid? That empty skull. . . . But no! Why seek to know or teach? 'Tis enough for my purpose that he needs my art. He will come again . . . again."

The mutterings were lost upon the two students, but they sat bolt upright with a start as the man straightened himself again, striking against a pendent cluster of human bones that hung behind him as he did so. The dismal rattling was uncanny, and seemed to communicate itself to all the hanging objects, as they swayed to and fro in the narrow space. The parchments shivered together like dry leaves in a wind, and the heavier things swayed pendulously back and forth as if suddenly endowed with life. The man was still smiling as he steadied the rattling bones.

"Yes! You will undoubtedly live to be a cardinal, or a bishop at least, young sir. 'Tis written in the timeless book of fate, across the face of the night that cannot lie. But never refuse honours, Maitre Arnoul, when they come! Refuse nothing!"

He beckoned Louis to his side, and bade him look into his brew. The two stood whispering together in the far corner. Arnoul's brain was in a whirl. Here was a new sensation. He was to be a bishop—perhaps a cardinal! What did the man know of the future? He said it was fixed and certain. He was right there. Of course it was fixed—planned out and settled from the beginning of all things. The lad let his mind work along the line of least resistance, speculating vaguely. The past was phantom-like with its array of bloodless spectres. Even the present seemed but an unreal part

of one great NOW in which past and future both met and blended. How strangely Maitre Louis and Sir Guy fused into one character—and Sibilla and Jeannette were merged in one, too. And the oppressive odour? Was it the incense of St Mary's, or the flowers Jeannette carried in her hand? Was he already receiving the homage of the crowds that pressed forward to meet him?

The alchemist threw a handful of powder into the cooling vessel, and a yellow flame flared up from the mixture. The thick atmosphere was clearing slowly as the fumes filtered out through the aperture in the roof. He heard a voice speaking softly and as from a far distance.

"It is done, Maitre Louis. Never before have mortal eyes save yours and mine looked upon the great result! And I have spent my life in the achievement! Surely, it cannot fail me now! There can be naught wrong with the ingredients—naught amiss in my calculations! It will be cool ere long, and we can put it to the test.

"Come!" The voice was louder now and more natural. "We shall drink to our experiment in the sublime liquor of gold itself." The alchemist reached up to a shelf for a flask half full of a deep amber-hued liquid as he spoke. "This is the true distillation of life, the product of the alembic of the sages! I had it—the secret—from Maitre Albert himself when he was at Cologne. Drink!" And he poured out the golden liquid into three cups. "It might be the elixir of life!"

It choked and burned. Arnoul's head swam under the influence of the potent spirit. He was walking on cloud, on light air, and the road led to the mitre or to the sacred purple! He was without a body, floating

spirit-wise through the circumambient ether ! He had put off the cloying vesture of flesh, and soared triumphantly in undreamed-of realms ! He saw the goal clear and unmistakable before him in a swimming vapour of gold and amber and pink . . . !

The two students remained, sipping the fiery distillation and talking with their extraordinary host, until Arnoul bethought him that the gates of the University would soon be closed, and there was the danger of being shut out until the morning. He turned to Louis.

"Come," he said. "We had best be going, if we would be home to-night. I crave your pardon, Maitre Barthelemy, but the gates will be shut if we do not set out at once."

The master magician smiled. Arnoul might go as soon as it pleased him ; but he had need of Louis.

"Must you return at all?" he asked in his dry, nasal voice.

"Undoubtedly," replied the lad, thinking of his assignation with Jeannette.

"And you also?" asked the alchemist of Louis.

"No," replied the scholar, with a half-apologetic glance at his companion. "No. It is not. . . . It will not be necessary, I think. I can tarry until the experiment is completed."

"It is well," said the man approvingly. "You will remain. And you, young sir, when there is need, you will return hither. I have philtres which. . . . But you understand. I am ever at your dispositions."

The boy acknowledged his courtesy with an inclination of his head. Notwithstanding the charm of mystery that hung about the place, he was impatient to be gone. Jeannette was waiting for him. Barthelemy lifted the

heavy wooden bar and pulled the door open gently, inch by inch. He peered out through the narrow opening as it swung silently upon its hinges, until, satisfied that no one was within sight or hearing, he had it quite open and allowed Arnoul to pass.

As the young man turned to salute him, he put both his hands upon his shoulders and looked steadily into his eyes. The boy saw the huge, egg-shaped head before him, and felt the pressure of the hands upon his shoulders; but what he was most conscious of was the fascination of those steady eyes. They pierced and burnt, as it were with a pain almost physical; and, what was more, he felt his own eyes growing fixed and heavy before them. With an effort he looked upon the ground. Maitre Barthelemy laughed his dry laugh. "You will come again," he said sharply. "Until then—honour! Go forward and prosper! Farewell!"

He watched the clerk's figure out of sight, and then, entering, closed and barred the door again.

"And now, Maitre Louis, that we are alone and have that for which the philosophers have ever striven and laboured almost within our grasp, let us fortify our souls again with the golden liquor!" He filled the cups afresh, and, as they drank, he busied himself in removing the parchment, skull and other objects from the table, and putting an alembic of clay in their place, all the while keeping up a running commentary upon what he was doing.

"We shall place this preparation that has cost me so much care in the retort, and heat it, like the furnace of Nabuchodonosor, seven times. And indeed it might be the three children in the furnace, for there are three brains from the Provost's gallows, as well as the bones,

dissolved in the strong acids, as I did but now explain to you. And, if I am right"—the man was fairly shaking now with excitement and hope, while Louis' eyes and drooping lip expressed his fear and suppressed terror—"if I have made no mistake, in a few moments you shall see the true essence of life issuing from the worm of the still."

His trembling hands ladled some of the contents of the foetid cauldron into the alembic. A great slab of stone was set upon the table, and the brazier lifted upon it, the clay bowl of the still being plunged into the glowing coals.

"Blow!" commanded the master, handing Louis a pair of bellows. He took a bellows himself, and both men directed them upon the fire. Little by little the temperature was raised and the steam began to pour from the worm in heavy, oppressive clouds. The charcoal was glowing with a white heat. Master and pupil were intent, rapt, saying no word, the sweat pouring from their brows, their gaze bent alternately upon the mouth of the worm and the flaming glare at the brazier. Suddenly the master cried aloud. The steam had changed from greyish white to blue. Now it came forth from the orifice in bursts of fire. Whatever it was, this essence of life, it was consuming itself as soon as it was born of the heat and the human members.

"Water!" cried the magician. "Water, for the love of God! Plunge the worm in water, or all is lost and the labour of a lifetime spent in vain!"

Louis dropped his bellows and did as he was bid. The tube was now dipping under the surface of the water; and, besides the steam and smoke that bubbled up to the surface, they could see a waxy, viscid mass falling slowly to the bottom of the receptacle. They

worked at the bellows as if for dear life, sweat pouring down their cheeks, breath laboured and catching.

At last Maitre Barthelemy cried "Enough!" The distillation was ceasing: and they laid aside the bellows. Slowly the fire cooled; the glowing alembic lost its whiteness; the distillation stopped passing over. The two men were shaking like aspens. Their faces were white and hard and drawn, though the sweat was still dripping from them. Only, Maitre Barthelemy's mouth worked spasmodically. Again his trembling hand reached and fumbled for the phial: and a third time they quaffed the potent spirit. The chamber was growing dark by now, for little of the fading light filtered through the half-opened aperture above them. The alchemist drew the skin entirely across it and lit two candles, placing them upon the table, one on either side of the worm of the alembic. He stared down upon the few goutts of waxlike substance that had formed and become congealed at the bottom of the water.

"At last!" he exclaimed, in a voice almost choked by his emotions. "At last the toil of years and the labours of a lifetime bring their reward! Look, Louis, look! There lies the veritable elixir of life, that all the world has searched for, and in vain! Within the palm of my hand I shall hold that for which kings would give their very crowns . . . !"

"But are you sure, master . . . ?"

"Sure!" He hissed the word through his clenched teeth. "How could I have failed? Life is but fire and warmth. When life wanes we grow cold and die. And there in those few precious drops have I imprisoned the very principle of fire itself! No longer does it soar! Look how quietly it rests beneath the water in its unaccustomed form! I have changed the elemental

fire into an earth and bound it down within that celestial food that shall give to me unending life!"

It seemed likely enough to be true. Whatever it was that had been issuing from the worm of the still in spurts and flashes of flame had congealed into that reddish-brown substance and sunk to the bottom of the vessel. Was it imprisoned fire? The very fount and principle of life? The elixir that could conquer sickness and old age, and give enduring vital powers to the worn-out organs and frayed tissues of mortal men?

Maitre Barthelemy, rolling back his sleeve, plunged his arm elbow-deep into the water and drew forth a particle of the precious substance. He held it in the palm of his hand.

"At length," he said, apostrophising it, and seemingly oblivious even to the presence of his disciple. "At length, O ancient mystery! art thou given to the true seeker after knowledge! At length human eyes behold thee, thou very quintessence of life!" And he gazed lovingly at the morsel resting upon his bare palm.

Freed from its contact with the water, the waxen substance quickly dried, giving off a pungent smoke that curled upwards towards the roof.

"A lifetime spent in seeking," went on the master in his rhapsody. "The four quarters of the world ransacked for the ingredients! But at last . . .! Ye gods! How the imprisoned fire burns and strives upwards towards its empyrean source . . .! God in heaven!" The cry was wrung from him by the intense heat. The blue spirals of vapour trembled and curled, writhing above his open palm like living things born of the yellow wax. Suddenly they burst into a fierce flame. The whole substance flamed and flared, sending

off clouds of suffocating smoke. The man screamed aloud in his agony, striving to cast the new-found elixir of life from his hand. It was burning, eating, gnawing into the living flesh, and he could not rid himself of it. His sufferings were terrible to look upon as he writhed, shrieking in his pain, his hand on fire with the villainous substance he had made. Louis seized a vessel of water and dashed it over the unfortunate man's burning flesh. And he sank upon the bench groaning and crying, stupid with the agony, holding the mutilated member before his eyes. The place was full of pungent, choking smoke, the smell of charred flesh. The student tried to comfort him, to assuage his suffering, bringing cloths and oil from a jar that stood by. But the alchemist moaned and rocked his body to and fro. He did not seem to see Maitre Louis' horror-stricken face or to hear his commiserating words. Only, the imprisoned fire ran pulsing, throbbing, through his veins, and he held up his maimed hand before his unseeing eyes. The labour of a lifetime had been in vain—the long voyages, the weary journeyings in Spain and Africa, the colloquies with the Arabian alchemists, and the poring over strange writings of forgotten lore ; all his own work, the nightly vigil and the patient investigation—useless and without reward. The fiery principle of all living things had been for an instant wrested from the treasure-house of Nature, only to reassert its potency and to destroy.

The elixir of life was an agency of death ; and he sat there groaning, holding up his scorched and twisted hand, and rocking his body to and fro.

CHAPTER XVII

SIR SIGAR AND THE ABBESS

THE Lord of Moreleigh had business in Exeter. All the castle knew it before he set out; for when Sir Sigar rode abroad he rode in state befitting his station; and grooms and pages had been rushing about the courtyard and stables from early morning until the time of his departure, making ready his train. He rode with two men-at-arms before him and two behind. A squire and a page completed his retinue. All these wore gay clothes, upon some portion of which the arms or device of the Viponts figured prominently. His own garments were in sombre contrast with those of his escort. The yellow leather jerkins and bright steel caps of the retainers, and the blue and red of the page's suit served to accentuate the black silks and velvet that set his own well-proportioned figure off to so great an advantage. But for an edging of dark fur about his dress and collar, and the dull gleam of gold in chain, buckles, spurs and rings, which he displayed upon both hands, he was clothed entirely in sable. He sat erect upon his magnificent charger, a heavy hand upon the rein, for the mettlesome beast fretted at the dignified pace at which he rode. The brows were drawn together as usual over the piercing eyes, and his lips tight locked in a haughty and disdainful smile.

His business done, he rode to the Benedictine monastery, over which his sister presided as the Lady

Abbess. Now, if there was one person in the world for whom Sir Sigar Vipont had an unmitigated respect and, at the same time, a salutary fear, it was his sister, the Abbess. As a child she had ruled him with a rod of iron, for she was by some years older than he, and had the dogged and overbearing spirit of the Viponts just as strongly as, if not more developed than, her brother. Her training in the cloister had robbed her of nothing of her strong character, while it had taught her to keep herself thoroughly in hand under any and all circumstances. Where Sir Sigar flared up to an unreasoning madness when he was crossed, the Lady Abbess preserved a placid demeanour and unruffled countenance that made her all the more terrifying to those upon whom her wrath happened to fall. Sir Sigar was undisciplined. The Abbess Matilda was discipline personified.

The Lord of Moreleigh certainly hoped, as his squire knocked upon the monastery gate, that the Abbess had not heard of his latest outbreak. But he was outwardly calm and unconcerned as he bade his attendants await him at the outer hostel, although he was anything but certain of the manner of his reception.

His brotherly salutations were cut short by the Abbess's matter-of-fact, incisive tones. She had heard.

"Sigar, you're a fool! How often shall I have to tell you that you're ruining that girl of yours by the absurd way you're bringing her up? The idea! Poor, motherless child, in a castle like yours! With a father like you! With——"

"But, Matilda——"

"Don't 'but' me, Sigar! I won't have it! Blessed Saints! It's more than ruining Sibilla. It's a scandal; that's what it is. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Why! All Exeter's talking of your shameless treatment of the poor girl."

"Matilda! Sister! Give me leave——"

"Be silent, Sigar! May I not speak in my own Abbey? It's too bad your not being able to control your temper. One of these days evil will come of it, be you sure. As to Sibilla, you must send her here to me. You are not fit to bring up a young girl like Sibilla. She will grow up like you, absolutely incapable of self-control. Or worse still, you will break her spirit altogether, with your abominable goings on."

Vipont wilted visibly as his sister spoke to him. She was a little woman, with plump, apple-red cheeks, and large grey eyes. The black Benedictine habit made her look taller than she really was, but, standing before her brother, it was easy to see that she was head and shoulders shorter than he. Her face, framed in its square of white linen under the flowing veil, was quite calm while she rated him; whereas Vipont's expressed anything but placidity. He was inwardly fuming, but he stood so in awe of his masterful sister that he kept his annoyance within due bounds. He spread his hands out in a deprecatory gesture, and made several attempts to speak; but the Abbess took no notice and continued roundly taking him to task.

"I would ask you to remember," she said severely, "that all this is exceedingly unpleasant for me. There should be no cause for talk in any brother of mine. You have your duty to your sister as well as to Sibilla to remember."

"I assure you, sister," essayed the knight with a nervous catch in his breath.

The Lady Abbess cut him short. "I want none of your assurances, Sigar, I know what your promises are

worth. What you are to do is to send Sibilla to me. I shall look after the girl, since you are quite unfit to have her. She shall come to me here——”

“But, sister, I don’t think she will come.”

“Not come? But I say she shall come. You are to do exactly what I tell you and send her here to me at once. I will have no excuses. Blessed Saints! Am I to tell you twice that I wish a thing done?”

“Nay, sister! ’Tis not I; ’tis Sibilla you have to reckon with. You may say what you please—I may say all I can—but Sibilla will not budge unless she wants to.”

“Tut, tut!” exclaimed the Abbess. “A nice way to have brought your child up, forsooth! Where is your parental authority? Where is her filial obedience? You must *make* her come.”

“I cannot,” said the knight.

“Then I shall,” retorted the Lady Abbess. “I myself shall go to Moreleigh and bring her back with me.”

“You will fail.”

“Fail? Not a bit of it! Do you think I can’t manage a chit of a girl like Sibilla?”

“I tell you, sister, she won’t come.”

“And why not, pray?”

“She would not leave Moreleigh and me.”

“You!” snorted the Abbess. “You! A fine father indeed! The creature’s not a fool, is she?”

Vipont frowned. “I will not have Sibilla spoken of so, even by you, Matilda.”

“Tut, man! You know perfectly well what I mean. Am I not her aunt? A nice person you to defend her name after beating her with a riding-whip!”

“I beg of you, Matilda!” Vipont wilted again.

“Oh! I heard all about it. Saint Scholastica! The

town rings of it. They talk of it in taverns yet. No. I shall see niece Sibilla, and bring her back with me to Exeter. In the Abbey, at least she will be safe and sound. The sisters are not beaten with riding-whips."

Vipont writhed, muttering that the girl would not leave Moreleigh for the dull life of a cloister. The Lady Abbess had sharp ears. At the word "dull" she turned upon her brother again, still smiling, but with an ominous flash in her clear grey eyes.

"Dull? The Abbey dull? She will not find time to be dull! There are matins and masses and vespers to be at. There will be the reading of holy books to fortify her mind. I warrant me she has no learning. How should she have, poor maid, in a rough keep like Moreleigh, with none but soldiers and stable boys and rude peasant women?"

"You would not make a nun of her, Matilda?"

"A nun? Stuff and nonsense! What a fool the man is, to be sure! Yet she might do worse than be a Benedictine. Listen to me, Sigar. This Sibilla of yours has grown up like some wild thing. She needs discipline. She knows naught but of Moreleigh and men. She must mix with women of her own rank and station. Her mind must be enlarged. She must be trained to be worthy of the position she will some day take in the world. The world . . . ! Stop! I have it! The very thing!"

The Lady Abbess rubbed her plump hands together, and allowed a broader smile to spread over her rosy face as she pieced together a scheme for her niece's education. Her brother saw the change in her countenance—there was a faint resemblance to Sibilla when the Abbess smiled like this—and heard the new inflection in her voice with much relief. His brows relaxed.

"She will go to the court; or, better still, abroad. You are right, Sigar, for once in your life. 'Twould be too sudden a change to coop her up here. She must travel. Now, don't contradict me! Don't argue the point! I say she must travel, and travel she shall."

"But, Matilda, Sibilla cannot travel abroad alone!"

"And who said she should travel alone? Certainly not I."

"I cannot take her."

"I should hope not, indeed! That would be a pretty way out of the difficulty."

"And you . . ."

"I stay where I am, but Sibilla—Sibilla shall go a-faring in the train of some great lady. I shall find the one to take her. She shall see the world. She shall learn——"

"She won't go."

"You madden me, Sigar! She will go. Trust a girl to miss such a chance!"

"You are wrong, Matilda. You are wrong."

"I have made up my mind," the Lady Abbess asserted blandly, her lips coming together with a snap. "She shall do as she is told!"

Vipont shrugged his shoulders. "Very well then, Matilda," he said. "Manage it if you can. But you will find that you are mistaken."

"Send the child to me," commanded the Abbess, "and I shall talk to her."

"I shall bring her with me when next I ride to Exeter."

"Good! It is all arranged. Blessed Saints! Will the girl dare to refuse me? I should think not, indeed!"

Notwithstanding which protestation on the part of

the Lady Abbess, the persuasion of Sibilla was no easy task ; and nearer three years than two elapsed ere she was finally packed off on her travels in the train of the "great lady" whom her aunt had persuaded to chaperon her.

Her plans for Sibilla had put the Lady Abbess in a good temper. For the remainder of the interview she was in the best of humours with herself and with her brother. His brow cleared as they spoke together, and before long he looked quite a different man. The heavy lines that his habitual frown had drawn between his eyes and at the corners of his mouth were not indeed gone, but they were smoothed away to faint pencillings as he smiled. His eyes, too, lost their worried, brooding look, and sparkled frank and clear as he became more animated ; for, if he feared the Lady Abbess and her sharp tongue, he loved his sister Matilda none the less. Seen thus, he was a handsome man, splendidly set up, noble in his bearing and gesture, utterly different from the overbearing, morose and self-centred master of Moreleigh.

When at length he turned to go, the Abbess once more spoke of Sibilla.

"You will bring the child without fail, Sigar?" she asked.

"Without fail, Matilda ; though I doubt me that you will be able to persuade her."

"Tut!" said the Abbess. "Leave that to me. Good-bye, Sigar, Keep your temper in hand and let us have no more talking of Vipont among the serfs and pot-boys. Blessed Saints! You were ever unruly. You need your sister to manage you! A good ride to you, and a speedy return—with Sibilla!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MESSENGER FROM DEVON

WHILE the untoward events at the laboratory of Maitre Barthelemy were taking place, Arnoul had hurried back from the sinister neighbourhood, keeping as far as was possible from the Château de Vauvert. He had passed through the gate of the University in time and without challenge, and had made his way to his own lodging.

Although he was overwrought by the events of the afternoon, and above all by the strange predictions and counsels of Maitre Barthelemy, which undoubtedly had a strong effect upon his mind, he was careful to see that his most gaudy dress was properly adjusted, his short cloak jauntily hung from the shoulders, his newest headgear set off to its best advantage, and his weapon carefully concealed, before he sallied forth again to keep his tryst with Jeannette at Messire Julien's tavern.

But once having entered the wine-house, and found himself under the spell of the girl's bright eyes, he speedily forgot both vaticination and advice, and gave himself over entirely to the pleasure of the moment. It was a pleasure he had been looking forward to all the day. Now he had come to make an evening of it, and he intended to enjoy life while it lasted, careless of the vague stirrings of a conscience that even the alchemist's words had still been able to evoke.

And so the wine flowed. Wit, repartee and jest were bantered about. The falling of the dice was as music

in his ears, Jeannette's smile a thing to live for. The company was composed, for the most part, of the regular *habitués* of the place, with most of whom Arnoul had long been on the best of terms.

The hours sped on, measured out by the emptying of the wine cups and the falling of the dice. The warm blood of youth flowed, coursing, exhilarating. The tavern was becoming noisy. Jeannette's eyes sparkled, he thought, like twin stars as she leaned towards him. Her lips were as rose-red petals of June flowers. She toyed with a silver ornament hanging around her throat that shone, a flickering disc of light, upon her bosom. He had seen it before, he remembered, but to-night it interested him as it had never done. What were those cabalistic signs scratched upon it—those scrawls and dashes and perforations? It was a type of Jeannette herself. He put out his hand to grasp it, but the girl drew away and, with a little shrug, hid it in her breast.

"No, my Englishman! You must not touch my talisman! Not to-night! You have seen it often before, and I can tell you no more about it now than I told you then. You would discover nothing of its meaning by looking at it."

"Let me have it," he begged. "Perhaps there is some sign, some cipher, we have overlooked. Do you remember nothing of its history?" He fumbled at her throat to get possession of the disc.

"Nothing other than I have told you. I have had it—and worn it, so—ever since I was a child—ever since I can remember. Let go! Let go, Arnoul! You disarrange my dress! Let the bauble be, since you cannot read its meaning! Let it be, for to-night at least!"

They took no notice, neither of them, of the others in the tavern. They might have been alone, for all the

heed they paid to any save themselves. Someone spoke at his elbow. "How now, Maitre Englishman! Where is your crony, Maitre Louis, this evening?"

"You are not likely to see him here to-night. I left him without the wall at the Château de Vauvert." He gave the answer roughly, scarce turning his head; and the speaker, satisfied with it, though annoyed at the manner in which it was given, turned away with a muttered—"All right, Englishman! A civil answer costs no more than a rough one! You might at least be civil!"

Jeannette Blanches Mains leant forward towards Arnoul. She whispered, a sort of terror in her voice. "Where did you say Louis was?"

"Behind the haunted Château," said Arnoul carelessly.

"And with . . .? With? Who is he with?"

"*With*, Jeannette? What do you mean? If you talk like that, I shall begin to be jealous of you! But no! I cannot be jealous of poor Louis!"

"Louis! I hate him!" Jeannette showed her hatred in her face as well as spoke it.

"And Barthelemy . . .?"

"He is with Barthelemy then?"

"Yes. But what of that? You have not fallen in love with Barthelemy, have you?"

"No." The girl was shaking—manifestly ill at ease, and Arnoul wondered.

"What of Barthelemy?" he asked.

"I am afraid of him. He is so uncanny! And yet I am drawn to him somehow. I never feel safe when he is about. I don't know why, but it is true. And he seems to hold me with his eyes whenever I see him. I fear for Maitre Louis."

"Jeannette! Barthelemy is nothing to you, is he?"

You have never even spoken to him. Louis I might be jealous of, did I not know that you will have nothing to do with him. But Barthelemy—it is too absurd!”

“I dislike him, Arnoul. Yet I am strangely drawn to him. What it is I cannot tell. Oh, I fear him, Arnoul! I fear him!”

“There is nothing to fear, Jeannette. I will never let him so much as say a word to you if you do not wish it. You need never fear! No one shall dare to frighten you while I am near to defend you. God’s death! Do you think I would not challenge every clerk in the whole University for you, Jeannette?”

His hand mechanically sought the concealed dagger, but with a laugh he withdrew it again. Then he caught her hands in his own and dropped his voice suddenly to a whisper, heedless of the nods, the smiles, the coarse comments of the others in the tavern. After all, if he took notice at all, what did the others matter? His life was his own and his doings. He would live for himself and now! And the girl’s fear and animation held him in their thrall. He was intoxicated with the sparkle of her eyes, with the tear trembling on her cheek, beguiled by the sensuousness of her full red lips. All the hot flames of passion flared up, surrounding, bathing, engulfing, carrying him away. He was aghast at their very fierceness. Yet he drew closer and ever closer to her. The fumes of the wine had not so clouded his brain but that he saw the passion in her face, and felt the answering pressure of her hands. The dice fell, and rough voices sounded in the tavern. But his mind was in a whirl, and he heard nothing save her whisper in his ear.

A low knock sounded upon the door. No one heard it. Then the hinges creaked as the door slowly opened,

and a voice, pregnant with forebodings, came from without.

"I seek Arnoul the Englishman. Is he within?"

Through the doorway, in the dark street, a glimpse of a white habit showed ghostlike. Silence fell like a pall upon the revellers. Jeannette grasped the lad's hands convulsively, apprehensive, fearful, and then let them drop. She had gone pale and trembled. Her great eyes stared out into the darkness.

Arnoul himself, flushed with the wine, rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I am he," he made answer, and he moved towards the door. "What wouldst thou with me?"

"Hence, then!" spoke the vibrant voice. "All the long day and night have I sought thee through the streets of Paris. I have gone from our cloister to the Abbey of St Victor, and thence, by devious ways and with much seeking, to thy lodging near St Austin's Convent. There they told me that I might find thee here. Hither am I come, for there are tidings, urgent tidings, that brook no delay . . . tidings from thy home in Devon. I have come to seek and acquaint thee with them."

Like a wan ray of light struggling through clouds, the words broke through upon the boy's brain. What was it—home—the voice had said? The thought lost itself among the others—home, Barthelemy, Jeannette, Sibilla, Guy. He staggered unsteadily across the threshold into the dark night.

CHAPTER XIX

ARNOUL BECOMES A MAN

IT was a choir monk of the Cistercians who steadied him, and behind the white-robed figure, gleaming ghastly in the darkness, stood another form, dark and motionless as a shadow. The monk slipped his arm through Arnoul's, and led him away from the tavern door to the patch of light given out by a flickering lamp that burned dimly before a corner shrine of Our Lady the Virgin. When they stood within the circle of its meagre radiance, the monk loosed his arm and faced him. The shadow crept up silently and stood before him in the feeble rays.

Muddled as he was by the drink, in a flash he knew them both. It was Brother Anselm from Buckfast with another Cistercian—Anselm, the master of the alumni—and Roger, honest Roger from Woodleigh by Avonside. What were they doing here, of all people in the whole wide world? What had brought them to France, and sent them out wandering in the streets of Paris at such an hour? His face brightened, and his hands went out to grasp theirs.

"Roger!" he cried thickly. "And Father Anselm! You are indeed well come!" But there was no response. Roger indeed caught the lad's hand in his own rough palm and pressed it silently; but the monk regarded him sadly, almost sternly, and the lines deepened on his brow.

"Speak! Speak!" said the lad impatiently. "Have

you just come from Buckfast? When did you reach Paris? What are the tidings that you bear? And what news is there, Roger, of Woodleigh and Moreleigh? Speak! By the Holy Mass, one would think you were stricken dumb! Come back with me," he went on. "Come back to Julien's! There is light and warmth there, and we can quaff the red wine and talk of home and friends in peace and comfort." But Roger only squeezed his hand the harder, and the monk's lips moved slowly as though he were about to speak. At length he said solemnly. "I bear you evil tidings, Arnoul, sad tidings from your home. Your brother——"

"Guy?" the lad broke in eagerly.

"Your brother, Sir Guy," the monk continued—and his voice had a catch in it—"the priest of Woodleigh, is dead."

"Dead!" cried Arnoul, the colour fading from his face as he started back, sobered in a moment by the suddenness of the terrible news. "Dead!" He passed his hand up questioningly over his eyes and brow. "I never knew he was ill! He cannot be dead! When did he die? No one told me anything! Why did they not tell me?" He looked with startled, questioning eyes from the monk to Roger and, reading nothing in the faithful man's wooden sorrow, back again to the monk.

"He was not ill," the brother explained in a slow, level voice. "He was murdered."

"Murdered!" cried the lad. "It can't be true! I will not believe it! Who would lift his hand against Guy, so good and so beloved? Who would murder a priest—a poor priest—like my brother? My brother. . . ." And Arnoul sobbed in spite of his questions.

"Nevertheless it is true," the level voice continued,

speaking slowly and distinctly. "Sir Guy of Woodleigh was murdered by Sigar Vipont, the Lord of Moreleigh, in a fit of passion. He is dead now—may the good God assoil him!—and he is buried in his own church at Woodleigh. You do well to grieve, Arnoul, for your brother was a holy man.

"But I have much to say to you, and it must be said at once. Shall we go to your lodging or will you come with me to our cloister? There is a message from the Bishop and a letter. Also, there are words from Sigar Vipont."

"God's curse upon him!" put in Roger. They were the first words he had spoken.

"Guy. . . .! My brother. . . .! Dead . . .!" sobbed Arnoul. "Take me where you will, Brother—to my lodging or to the cloister. My brother . . . dead! My poor brother!"

A whisper between the two monks, and they moved off in the direction of the Bernardines', meeting none but a few roysterers on the way.

Brother Anselm recounted to Arnoul the manner of his brother's death—how he had encountered Sir Sigar in a towering rage, and had drawn his anger upon himself by some remonstrance; how the knight had worked himself into an ungovernable fury, and, drawing his dagger, had plunged it twice into the heart of the unhappy priest, who fell dying in the very court of Moreleigh Castle.

"But he had a beautiful burial," the monk continued. "The Lord Abbot went down to sing the requiem, and such a choir as was never heard in Woodleigh! All the people from miles around were there. The churchyard was full to overflowing, and the long street crowded with the mourners. Even the retainers of Moreleigh

kneelt within the church weeping, praying for the priest and for their lord.

“And Sir Sigar has gone to Rome. It was a sudden, a mad act; and, ere your brother breathed his last, he had repented him of it. He stood, bowed and haggard, at the far edge of the crowd while the dirge was being sung in Woodleigh church. Twice he sought his absolution at the Abbey, but the Abbot had no power to loose the bonds of such a heinous sin—the murder of a priest. Nor could the Bishop grant him absolution. He went on foot to Exeter to seek it, and the Bishop told him—what is true—that only our Lord the Pope himself at Rome could free his soul from its awful guilt. So he has set out for Rome, repentant and sorrowing, vowing to do whatsoever penance his Blessedness shall give to him.”

Arnoul's grief, poignant though it was, did not prevent his understanding what had happened. He was torn by contrary emotions, profound and bitter grief, a sudden and vindictive hatred of the murderer. But the monk continued, still speaking slowly and distinctly.

“Sir Sigar has said that he will do what lies in his power to make amends for his crime by providing for all your needs—the brother of his victim. And my Lord of Exeter—there is a letter from him I have for you—will offer you a benefice in his Cathedral church. I have seen them both before setting out.”

They reached the postern gate of the Bernardines' cloister, and passed through it, the brother opening it with a key he carried. Striking a light, he lit an oil lamp. The four men were in a small, vaulted chamber opening from the passage that gave direct upon the gate. The room was bare and plain—evidently no more than a place of waiting. The Buckfast monk was pale

and calm. Arnoul moved about restlessly and nervously. That Guy was dead he realised in a dull sort of way ; but the full meaning of it all had not yet come home to him. Roger stood silent and grief-stricken, a dumb look of pity and sorrow for the boy in his face. The other brother saw that his lamp was burning properly, and departed.

"These are the letters," the monk proceeded, "that I have to give into your hands." He looked at the writing on the cover of each, as he handed it to the boy.

"The first is from the Lord Abbot. You will read it at your leisure. It gives a full account of all that has taken place ; and Father Abbot bade me give you his blessing in this your trial. . . . Here is one from the Bishop of Exeter. I understand his lordship purposes offering you a canonry that he has at his disposal. He feels for you deeply, and he has taken Sir Guy's death to heart almost as much as Father Abbot. The third was given me by the seneschal at Moreleigh. It has no writing on the wrapper, but I believe it is from Sir Sigar himself. There is a small matter of money, too, given me for you by Abbot Benet. I cannot give you that to-night, but you shall have it in the morning."

Arnoul stretched out his hand mechanically for the letters, and placed them in his vest. What was he to do now ? he thought. Guy's death would change his life so much. He thanked the monk brokenly. "Guy dead . . . ! My brother murdered . . . !" It repeated itself over and over again like some monotonous threnody in his mind.

"I shall go home to my lodging now," he said, in a voice broken and tremulous with emotion. "Let me think ! I cannot realise it all ! My brother Guy

murdered . . . ! Yes! Let me go home to think alone!"

They let him out into the street, his haggard eyes giving the lie to all his finery. The monk gazed sadly after him for a space, as he stumbled slowly away from the Abbey. Roger stood, twitching at his sleeve, wondering if he should follow him, as he staggered into the darkness.

Then, conquering his indecision, and with a word to Brother Anselm to keep the gate open for him, he ran after the retreating figure.

"Master Arnoul! Dear Master Arnoul—for the love of Christ do not look so terribly!" Poor Roger was on the verge of tears himself as he thrust a packet into the other's hand. "Isobel bade me give you this, and to tell you how she grieves for you. It is Sir Guy's crucifix. None other than you should have it. Ay! She grieves and sorrows, does Isobel. Ah, lad! We all grieve. I . . . I . . . as I cannot say."

The true-hearted fellow caught Arnoul's hand once more and pressed it in his own rough palm. Then, dashing the tear from his eyes, he turned and made off again towards the patient figure of the waiting monk at the postern gate.

Arnoul walked on, stunned and suffering dumbly. Every nerve was on edge and raw—quivering, palpitating, agonising. He could not straighten it out and see it all clearly. He reached his lodging and climbed the stairs. Finding tinder, he struck a light and took the packets from his breast, turning them over vacantly. He broke the seal of one and took out the roughly carved image of the dead Saviour hanging on the cross. Kissing it reverently, in memory of Guy, he laid it gently on the table. Then he opened the largest letter. It

was from the Bishop. He read through the lines of sympathy, half understanding. Yes, it was a canonry. The word stood out clear in the writing. Maitre Barthelemy had said. . . . But what had the alchemist to do with it? His brother was dead . . . ! Guy was murdered! He broke the seal of the second letter. The Abbot's writing. More words of sympathy and consolation. Oh, that Father Abbot were here! Then followed an account of the murder and of Sir Sigar's pilgrimage in search of absolution. The Abbot had written "Pray for him!" twice over. Pray for him? How could he pray for him? He would murder him if he could! Had he not robbed him of his brother? Were his hands not red with Guy's blood?

He flung his hat down and his gay red cloak in a heap upon the floor. The third letter he had forgotten, and it slipped unnoticed to the ground. Then he blew out the lamp and for a while paced up and down the narrow room in the darkness. His mind was caught in a torrent of surging emotions and swept hither and thither hopelessly. The only point that stood out now with certainty, clear, vivid, dominating, was that Guy was dead. Around that central fact the other thoughts all moved—his call to the ecclesiastical state and the Bishop's canonry; the wasted, and worse than wasted, life that he had been leading. It all gathered itself up with a confused intensity and force. He saw himself taking leave of the Abbot, full of hope and spirits, as he went first to St Victor's; drifting, afterwards, in the devious currents to which he had committed himself; and he realised with a start how near he had come to the fatal brink towards which they had been dragging him.

Guy was dead! Life, on a sudden, seemed not the same. It all came out with new colours, new values,

new meaning. And so, on and on, urged forward in thought-circles by the rushing emotions, his mind revolved until at last, worn out with sheer fatigue and grief, he threw himself as he was upon the bed and fell into a light and troubled slumber.

CHAPTER XX

ARNOUL SEEKS A GUIDE

THE sun had not yet risen over the roofs and spires of the city when Arnoul, worn out with the raging conflict of emotions within his breast, stood at the open casement of his lodging. His face was haggard and drawn; and his eyes, sunken and dulled with sheer bodily fatigue, had the expression of a hunted animal's. He had discarded the gay dress of the night before and wore the simple habit from the Buckfast looms in which he had come to France—it seemed so long ago! With bowed head and hands resting upon the sill, insensible to the chill of the early morning, he looked out upon a thick mist that hung like a curtain before him. It came up from the marshes that bordered the Seine, writhing in fantastic shapes as the air moved it hither and thither, wreathing itself round the towers and spires that rose above the sleeping city, hiding the lesser buildings under an impalpable white pall, clammy, damp, dispiriting, though he hardly noticed that it was there. It fell in sparse, congealed drops upon the streets, the squares, the roofs, and trickled down from gables, eaves, and cornices, over blind wall and house side, slowly, persistently, noiselessly, like great tears. It came through the open window and drifted into the cheerless room, standing out like clammy sweat upon the walls. It gathered itself up and dripped slowly from the window-cornice upon his bent head, his dress, his hands. But he stood there heedless and unnoticing until, chilled

to the very bone, a paroxysm of shivering seized him.

The spasmodic action brought his dulled mind back from its lethargy. All the torture of the night rushed back upon him with new and bitter vividness. A new day had come, and with it new burdens, new anxieties, a feeling of loneliness and helplessness such as he had never known. Still shivering, he closed the window and began to pace up and down the narrow room. What was he to do now? The question surged again and again through his brain as it had been surging all the night, even in his dreams. The news of Guy's murder had brought his mind back with a wrench to the old Devon days, and set the old thought-centres throbbing with the old thoughts. The peaceful Valley of Dart rose before him—the peaceful monks toiling and praying in the cloister calm—bringing not peace, but anguish to his soul. A vision of Sibilla, conjured up by some trick of his mind's working, wrung his heart. Yet in this there was the consolation of an infinite rest. She shared his sorrow. How could there be a doubt of that? In the thought all his feeling for her gathered itself together, as it were, and focussed itself. Her father had made her suffer before. Now he had wronged him. They were knit together in a common bond of suffering. Pity for himself—pity for her—was the root-feeling. But it was a pity wrapping both together in a something common. Suddenly he realised that it was not pity alone. It was something far more obvious, more close. She was an ideal to be enshrined, a lady to be loved. What a mistake it had all been, his dreams of an ecclesiastical career! Why had he come to Paris? He should have taken up the profession of arms. Surely that had been the right

course. The other was a fatal mistake! And yet . . . ! And yet . . . ! Neither was there hope for him in that direction. The Lady Sibilla of Moreleigh was rich and noble. He was poor and a clerk. And now, more than ever, with a river of his brother's blood flowing between them . . . ! The consolation turned out to be an agony, after all.

He paused and looked with unseeing eyes at the glory of the sun piercing the mist wreaths, unravelling the white palls of filmy gossamer, painting the vapours in a rosy glow.

No, it could never be! It ought not to be! And yet . . . ! Had he a vocation to an ecclesiastical estate? Was it not all a mistake from beginning to end? What was he to think . . . to do? Oh, what was to be done? He stood again at the window which he had opened for the second time, his lips forming the question silently, as his faculties became numbed and dulled again by fatigue and anguish.

In the streets, rapidly clearing of the mist in the growing sunlight, groups of students began to gather. Soldiers and townsmen appeared, the latter unbarring the shutters of their shops and houses, the former, for the most part, seeking the shortest way to the nearest tavern. Peasants were arriving from the country with fruit and vegetables, eggs and fowls; and men were carrying huge baskets of fish from the boats moored at the bank of the river.

Over all the noise and bustle of a waking city, rising like the hum of an enormous hive, boomed the great bell of Notre Dame, summoning the scholars to their daily Mass.

The sound brought Arnoul to himself again. It recalled the little church at Woodleigh, the Abbey, and

Exeter—that sound of the church bell. A confused vision of the far-away green fields of Devon, the soaring moorland, the silent figures moving in the quiet cloister, while the bells rang out beside Dart until the echoes died away on the heather-clad slopes, came before his mind. And the anguish of his soul broke out afresh. What was he to do? Oh, what was he to do?

He thought of the grass-grown mound that he had never seen, beneath which his only brother lay a-sleeping, so quiet and so still. He pictured the little churchyard, lying within the shadow of the tiny church, the solemn trees that kept guard over the silent dead. And as he unravelled strand by strand the medley of his tangled thought, the vision passed on to the shapeless confusion that had come into his own life.

It was like the fantastic mist-wreaths of the morning. Blurred and indistinct, the outlines of his possible vocation and of his old, yet new-born, love for Sibilla were the two points in his consciousness, blended and separated, forbidding and alluring, so unreasoningly imperative and yet so uncertain, as the mists of his indecision moved and tormented. But the thought of his brother helped him. There was a comfort even in thinking of his loss. What would his brother have him do? The question struck a new light into his tired brain, a new hope, a fresh strength. But it was like flint and steel without the tinder. His brother would have bidden him seek counsel from the Abbot; and the Abbot was far away at Buckfast; the brother dead. . . . The Abbot at Buckfast. Was there no one near at hand to help him? Was there no one to counsel, to direct? "What am I to do?" he moaned aloud. "Oh, God! What am I to do?"

The bell had ceased ringing; and the noise of the

street traffic rose, worldly, busy, shrill, to his high window. He leant forward, looking down upon the people as one seeking an inspiration from the gathering crowd.

Two Franciscan friars passed beneath him, carrying baskets for the collection of alms. They walked slowly, their eyes bent upon the ground, asking for food in the name of Christ, and thanking the donor in His name, taking no heed of the ribald jest or coarse wit with which they were not infrequently assailed. Their habit, like that of the Cistercian lay brothers, was of a rough brown material.

Suddenly his mind leaped to a new idea. Thomas! He would see Thomas—Brother Thomas—the great teacher of the Dominicans. Did not all Paris ring with his fame? His learning and his sanctity were noised abroad. The spleen and invective of the secular party had not altogether tarnished the name of Brother Thomas. And he would listen to him and help him—surely he would help him! Was he not ready to solve the difficulties and still the doubts of thousands? Was he not always patient and courteous, humble and kind? Surely it was an inspiration! He would go to St Jacques and lay bare his soul before Thomas Aquinas—at once the greatest teacher and the greatest saint in Paris.

Taking his cap and thrusting the Abbot's letter into his breast, he left the room and descended the long flight of steps to the street. People turned and stared at him as he passed, dishevelled and untidy, his face pale as death, great dark lines drawn under his hunted eyes.

"Ay, these scholars," said a countrywoman to her customers. "That is a brave life to lead! Dice and

drunkenness and brawls at night, and in the morning—that!” And she pointed at Arnoul. “The English Nation are sottish!”

“Nay, dame,” answered a serving-man who had been chaffering with her. “It is the midnight study, not the red wine, that brings those lines. I know it well; for, ere I took to service with Stephen the Mercer, I was a student myself and taught by day what I had——”

“And to what Nation did you belong? Not that it makes much difference, though! For if the English are sots with tails, the Germans are obscene in their cups, the Burgundians are beasts and fools, the Brabantines——”

“Oh, no! I was not one of those Nations, dame. I have good Norman blood running in my veins.”

“I might have known it! The Normans are as bad as any! It is proverbial—their boastfulness and vanity.”

“Well! Well! That’s better than some! A little vanity—though I do not allow that I am given to boasting—is a good thing at times. Now, were I a glutton Fleming, or a spendthrift Picard, or a seditious, thieving Roman, you might have to complain of! But I am a Norman, and sometime a scholar. I know a thing or two about the schools!”

“Thou a scholar!” interrupted Master Stephen himself, coming up behind him. “Thou a teacher! Thou art a lazy knave, a rogue, a wastrel! Have done with chattering here, thou vagabond, and get to thy work! Thinkest thou I pay thee to be idle? Begone with thy basket before thy shoulders taste the cudgel! Yet stay,” he added, catching sight of the countrywoman’s poultry. “Thou canst carry these, too!” And he proceeded to bargain and haggle with the woman over the price of her goods.

Meanwhile Arnoul, having taken the turning on the right hand, and passed through a maze of narrow and evil-smelling streets, had reached the celebrated Dominican convent of St Jacques. He rang the bell hanging at the doorway and was conscious of a pair of beady black eyes looking at him through the grille. He stated his name and his business simply enough to the porter, and asked to see Brother Thomas of Aquin. But the old lay brother evidently mistrusted him, which was no wonder, considering the appearance he made. He looked him up and down. He questioned him closely. Finally he left him waiting in a large, bare entrance room while he went to make inquiries as to whether it would be possible for Brother Thomas to see him.

After what seemed to Arnoul to be hours of suspense, the vague torment of uncertainty, grief and counter-grief struggling in his soul for mastery, the old porter returned with the message that he would be received.

"You can wait here," he grumbled, "or you can return in an hour's time. Brother Thomas has but now gone to the school where he lectures on theology. Did you look like a theologian"—and here he eyed Arnoul with evident disfavour—"I should advise you to go there now too; that is, if there were any chance of your finding a place. Since Brother Thomas has come to teach under Master Elias it has been so cramped and crowded that the largest of our lecture halls will not suffice for those who come to learn. They sit on the benches and on the floor, the window-ledges and the very steps of the chair . . . ! It is a sight worth seeing, young man; and since the pestilent seculars closed the schools two years ago, it has been worse than ever. For, look you! Those two months put the scholars to the

test. One saw the value of a man then! Those that were worth anything went over to the Cordeliers or came to Brother Thomas here. The worthless ones dropped out altogether; and few of them ever returned. But I doubt me that you are a theologian. You look more like one of those harebrained scholars that swarm through the University and keep folk awake all night with their singing and shouting. Most of them went to the bad when the seculars stopped teaching. You are an Englishman?" he continued garrulously. "That accounts for Brother Thomas seeing you, I suppose, busy as he always is."

His words, his garrulity, his criticism, his grudging of the Master's time, fell upon inattentive ears; for Arnoul's strong emotions had asserted themselves again as he learnt that he must wait until the theological class was over. He was almost unreasonable in his mad desire to unburden himself at once, though his listless face now expressed little of the demons raging within his breast. Doubtless the porter thought he had found an attentive listener, for he continued speaking.

"Ay, busy! That he is! Up and at his prayers before the first bell for prime, and back again in his cell before the brethren come for their devotions, lest they should fancy him what he is, a saint! And then his schools after the Mass and his great commentary on the Sentences of the Lombard! Four of our brothers are told off to write from his dictation. His letters go all over the world. He settles disputes and answers difficulties that pour in from every corner of Europe. At meal-time he is so wrapped up in thought that he does not know what he is eating, and sometimes forgets to eat at all. He is at work all the day and often nearly all the night as well—at his prayers, his books, his

counsels. And yet he finds time to give to you! Englishman!"—and he eyed poor Arnoul with a climax of disfavour—"the King himself does honour to Brother Thomas. King Louis is glad to listen to his words of wisdom and to consult him upon weighty matters. Do you realise the privilege you are having? Do you . . . ?" But the clang of the bell summoned him to the door; and, still sermonising and muttering as he went off to peer through the grating before opening it, he left Arnoul standing where he was in the centre of the bare, white room. The lad walked mechanically to a bench standing by the wall and, seating himself on it, he bent his head and covered his face with his hands. He must—so he argued with himself, as far as his tired brain would permit—he must gather his wits together, and be clear. To shake off the dull lethargy that possessed his mind and keep himself in hand, firmly, resolutely—not to lose himself in the paroxysm of incoherent emotions—this was his task now. To unravel the tangled skein of motives so that he could put things clearly, now that he had come to speak.

Little by little his will asserted itself in the lonely silence of the great room. But it was a silence living, pulsing, distressing, intolerable; and his battle was a hard one. The old threnody came and went like the diapason of a chant. Far better the crowded streets, the hum of life without, than silence and himself!

But no! Here was the lay brother again, with a jangling of keys and a rattle of beads, telling him that Brother Thomas was ready to receive him.

"Follow the friar," he said, pointing to a white form at the doorway. "He will lead you to Brother Thomas."

Arnoul crossed the room and followed his guide in silence down the long, bare passage. They turned more than once. There seemed to be a perfect maze of corridors and passages, turnings and steps up and down, in this great convent. But at length his guide paused before a low door and knocked.

"Enter," said a clear voice of extreme sweetness from within. And without any ceremony the lay brother pushed him through the open door.

Arnoul stood in the presence of Thomas Aquinas.

CHAPTER XXI

THOMAS AQUINAS OFFERS BALM

A FEW years before the period in which this tale is set, the difference between the religious of St Francis and St Dominic and the secular teachers of the University had become acute. Ever since the brilliant but unfortunate Abelard had let loose the spirit of rationalism and irreverence in the Paris schools, two clearly defined parties had struggled for the mastery over the intellect not only of the youth of the University, but of the entire thinking world. The two opposed currents of thought had often run counter to each other, often come into conflict and distracted the calm pursuit of knowledge in cloister, college and public square.

The Eastern heretical doctrines—pantheism, gnosticism and materialism, in their crudest and most insidious forms—had been imported from Arabia with the genuine teaching of Aristotle, and, finding a refuge and a protection under the great name of the Stagirite, had penetrated to the very heart of thinking Europe. The long-pending struggle between the orthodox representatives of the Fathers and of early Christianity and the philosophical innovators of the eleventh and twelfth centuries found expression, on the one hand, in the teaching of the friars and, on the other, in that of a group of the secular professors and students. While the former upheld the mystical and traditional doctrines of the Church, the latter affected the brilliant,

and often unscrupulous dialectic of free thought. While the friars were compromised in the ecstatic reveries of the Abbot Joachim as exemplified in the "Introduction to the Eternal Gospel," the seculars had descended, in the person of William of St Amour, to an attack on the principles of all religious life in "The Perils of These Last Times."

It was a fight to the death between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between the simple Christian teaching of the friars and the emulation and liberalism of the seculars. But it was more than this. It exemplified the lasting discord between the Gospel and intellectual pride, the Kingdom of Christ and the Mammon of Unrighteousness, the spirit of penance and the spirit of luxury. The University was split up into opposing factions; and where teachers argued and inveighed against each other in the schools, the scholars carried their disputes into the public streets and argued them out with fists and cudgels. The whole place was in a ferment. Coarse jests, spiteful invective, ribald songs, malicious ridicule, were poured out upon the friars. From the lecture-rooms of the University, from the court of the King, where Rutebœuf, the court poet, vented his spleen and satire, the scoffing spirit filtered down to the dregs and lees of humanity that stirred and festered beneath the intellectual life of the University, below the civil life of the Town, and, losing any claim to either wit or wisdom, broke out in foulness and sordid abuse.

Nor was it by satire and abuse alone that the religious were assailed. Brute force had been employed. It was only a short time before that the Brothers of St Jacques had not even dared to leave the shelter of their convent to procure food for their com-

munity. On Palm Sunday, Brother Thomas himself had been interrupted in the midst of the sermon that he was preaching in the Church of the friars and forbidden, in the name of the University, to continue. With consummate audacity, the University Beadle, clad in the gorgeous robes of his office, had commanded silence, and had proceeded to read before the indignant congregation a document full of reproaches and calumnies aimed at the Friars Preachers by the leaders of the seculars. Such an atmosphere of commotion, charged with intellectual unrest and moral ferment, was calculated to make the greatest saint lose his temper. Thomas Aquinas, against whom personally much of the hatred and spleen of the attack was levelled, had certainly been sorely tried; and, though he seemed to be enveloped in a halo of placid detachment from the world that seethed and stormed outside the convent walls, his face showed just the slightest trace of the stress and strain through which his order was passing.

Arnoul gazed upon the man whose task it was to consolidate the intellectual forces of Europe; and as he gazed upon the solitary, white-robed figure, his own distress and confusion of mind seemed to leave him. He felt that he was in the presence of colossal strength. Calm and peace seemed to radiate from the person of Brother Thomas—a calm and a peace that nothing could disturb, but rather that wrapped all other things in themselves. He had a sensation as of bursting bands about his heart. The question that had been throbbing and pulsing rhythmically in his brain died away, and instead his mind mutely formed the answer—"I must do whatever this man bids." For the moment at least, his dulled indecision left him, and

he was alert and keen. All the details of the cell and its occupant stood out clear. A low and badly furnished room lit by a single window. On the table a bronze lamp, a litter of parchments in various hands, a heap of books. But what struck him most was not the cell or its furniture but the friar himself. He had just risen from the table at which he had been seated, and stood, one hand resting upon the manuscript with which he had been occupied, half turned towards the entrance, looking at his visitor.

A man to all appearance young—he was only then in his thirty-second year—but with a gravity of feature ripened beyond his age. His composure of manner was extraordinary, approaching impassiveness; though beneath it one felt the enormous strength of character, the vast depth of power, that it hid. Of great height and imposing presence, already by a sedentary life inclined to corpulence, he seemed to fill the little cell. His large, dark eyes looked out from beneath a massive and a noble brow; and his face, though darkened by its southern blood, was of a remarkably clear complexion. His regular and refined features borrowed a still further dignity and beauty from the crown of dark, curling hair that betokened the religious. When he spoke, his clear and flowing words held his listener enthralled by reason of the very sweetness of their tones.

“My child,” he began, with the simple directness of one accustomed to go straight to the heart of a matter, “in what can I serve you?”

Arnoul threw himself upon his knees. Like a ship come into port after the fury of the storm, he felt the infinite peace that breathed from this strong presence. It was a father to whom he had come—a mother, rather; and he was a little child, bringing his troubles to his

mother's knee. He began to tell of his grief, his indecision, his anxiety—calmly, at first, and connectedly; but as he went on he worked himself up again to the pitch of incoherence. Confused words of Buckfast and his brother, Vipont and the Abbot and Sibilla, poured from his lips, mingled with his fears that he had really had a call from God and passed it by, his uncertainty whether God was still calling him.

Understanding his emotion, Brother Thomas put out a steadying hand and laid it on the lad's shoulder.

"You have a letter from the Abbot, my son?" he asked.

"Yes, Brother." And, taking the packet from his breast, he handed it to the friar. "There are two letters; one also from the Bishop."

"Patience then, my son! We shall see what the Abbot has to say first."

He glanced rapidly down the parchment, fixing all the details of the written words. Then he turned to the other letter, studying it carefully, and saying nothing before he laid both aside.

"It was your only brother?" he questioned at last.

"Yes."

"May God be gracious to him! And his murderer is the father of the maid you think you love?"

"Yes, my Brother."

"He has been refused absolution in England, this Vipont, and has set out for Rome to seek it. So the letter says.—How long have you been a scholar here, my child?"

"Nigh on two years, Brother. But I studied at Buckfast before I came to Paris."

"And you were sent to study——?"

"Theology, Brother, and possibly law or. . . . It was

intended that I should become a clerk and make a great career."

The friar's brows came sharply together for an instant as he heard the reply.

"And you have studied well?" He saw from the lad's garb that he was—now, at any rate—one of those students living as best they could in lodgings.

"At first, my Brother ; but"—and he hung his head—"of late I have not studied at all. I left St Victor's, where I was living, and drifted from the class-room to plunge into the gayer life of the City. I went with my companions to pot-houses and taverns. I spent my life in dicing and play until this dreadful murder brought me to my senses. Oh, my brother! My brother! And now, O God!" he sobbed. "I dare not think of advancing in sacred orders! I dare not even think of the Lady Sibilla—not even as a far-off ideal! My life is broken—ruined! Oh, what am I to do?"

The brother looked down upon the bent head with a great tenderness and pity. He saw the frame of the boy shaken with violent sobs. He understood, far better than the lad himself, the tempest that had raged within his soul. "Courage, my child!" Again his hand went out and touched the boy's shoulder. "All is not done and ended! Your life ruined? It is not yet begun! You say you have no vocation to religion; and I . . . I say that you have no call to the secular priesthood. Put the idea from your mind, my child! The Church is not in the world to provide careers—but to save souls. Would to God there were no rich benefices to be had, but that all were as we are—poor religious! You at least, my son, can refuse to use the Church as a stepping-stone to power. You have no call. No! When the voice speaks, it speaks with no uncertain

sound; and you would both know It and recognise It!"

The kneeling figure uttered a long-drawn sigh. The boy's sobs had ceased, as the calm, silvery voice had been speaking, removing one, at least, of the difficulties that assailed him. He had no vocation. There was one thing, at least, fixed and definite. One less agony of his indecision to torment him.

"And this maid—this Sibilla of whom you speak?" the friar continued. "You love her?"

"Love?" answered Arnoul, lifting his tear-stained eyes to the gentle, placid face above him. "How could I help loving her? Yet how can I dare to love? She so pure and good, and I a creature so vile! No, I may never hope! I have no estate. She is the heiress of Sigar Vipont, my brother's murderer. My brother . . . ! My unhappy brother!"

"Your brother is with God," the friar interrupted him solemnly. "Forgive your enemies as you would be forgiven." And he traced the sign of the cross upon his breast as he spoke.

"And the maiden? Does she also love you?" Brother Thomas continued calmly.

"Nay, I know not, my Brother. Still, I think . . . I thought——" The memory of Moreleigh rose before his mind—"I think she may have some care for me—some thoughts of me still. I am in your hands, my Brother."

Friar Thomas was silent for a moment, his great head bent in thought, his hand again upon the lad's shoulder.

And then, "Will you follow my advice?" he said.

"Gladly, Brother; and as the oracles of God."—How strange it was, this complete possession that the personality of Brother Thomas took of his soul! How wonder-

ful that he should promise blindly, and without a single misgiving, to do his utter bidding!

“Good, then! Put all thoughts of the ecclesiastical state from your mind. Reform your way of living now—at once. You will still remain in Paris; and you will begin your studies afresh. Come and see me from time to time—better still, come to my own school. And as touching this maid and her father—‘Vengeance is mine,’ saith the Lord. Forgive him and pray for him, and keep her pure memory within your heart. God leads us by many paths, in many ways. It may be that He will make all clear and plain, that He has created these two souls for one another, that you will be united in His own way and in His own time. Look up to Him, my son!—Eyes to the mountains whence cometh help! Possess your soul in patience! Trust in God! And I—” he spoke with humble confidence—“I will make known your petitions at the altar of God. Courage, my son, and confidence! You may not see how or when, but all will come right. The crooked and devious will be made straight and plain—the rough path smooth—for with God there is nothing impossible, and He has thee in His keeping.”

He removed his hand from the lad’s shoulder and raised him from his kneeling posture; and then, looking straight into his eyes with those wonderful, luminous eyes of his, he asked him gently: “And how long, my son, since you were shriven? Nay! Answer not,” he continued with infinite tact, as the dusky hue of shame mounted to the lad’s brow. “Perchance even I can understand. But let no barriers of doubt or self rise in your soul now! You will come with me to the church, and Brother Antony shall shrive you—a holy man and a discreet.”

"But, Brother, will you not yourself hear my confession and loose the bonds of my sins?"

"Nay, child, Brother Antony will hear your confession. You promised—" and a faint smile lit up the mobile lips and played in the inscrutable eyes—"you promised to obey. You will confess to Brother Antony."

Together they left the cell and passed through the monastery. The teacher struck thrice upon a little bell as he neared the door from the convent to the church. Together they knelt—the strong man and the lad, clothed, as it were, in the garment of his strength. A Dominican friar, bent under the weight of years, came towards them, and Brother Thomas signed to Arnoul that this was the discreet and holy man to whose keeping he was to entrust his conscience, whose aged lips, long consecrated to the service of his Master, were to pronounce the words that would strike the fetters of sin from his soul. In a corner of the dark church, with Thomas of Aquin at his prayers, drawing down from heaven upon them both the blessing of the Crucified, he knelt and told his sins. The trembling voice of the aged friar rose and fell upon his ears. The whispered penance was given and the counsel. His heart was soothed and wrapped in an abyss of great peace. And then the old voice swelled in the majesty of the awful formula of remission. The shaking hand traced the sign of salvation over him. Peace—infinite peace, and perfect rest! "*Dominus noster Iesus Christus te absolvat . . .* and I by His authority absolve thee . . . from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

He was loosed in heaven! Great waves of consolation entered his soul. He was bathed, absorbed in an

ocean of spiritual joy. His faculties were ecstasied—his whole being suffused with peace.

As he left the church, his penance and thanksgiving ended, he turned and approached his new-found friend and teacher. But as he drew near to the motionless figure, he saw a strange sight. Brother Thomas knelt upright, perfectly rigid, upon the bare pavement of the church, his hands clasped tightly together before his breast, his eyes fixed upon the Figure hanging from the cross over the altar. His lips did not move in prayer, neither did he seem to observe Arnoul's approach. The very beating of his heart seemed to have ceased, so still was he and motionless, rather like a dead man than a living. But great tears welled up in his eyes and coursed slowly down his cheeks. Brother Antony stood at his side, a palsied finger upon his lips, enjoining silence. He turned and led him to the door of the church, and then, raising a quavering voice, he whispered—"You have seen this day a saint in his ecstasy. The eyes of Brother Thomas see beyond this world. He gazes upon God. May He keep thee in thy comings and goings!"

He blessed Arnoul with the sign of the cross, and moved along the cloister. The lad stood a moment looking back upon the kneeling figure; and then, stepping forth into the sunlight, he left Brother Thomas in the great temple alone—with his God.

CHAPTER XXII

A YOUNG MAN FIGHTS TEMPTATION

FOR some days after his interview with Brother Thomas of Aquin, Arnoul remained quietly in the guest-house of the Cistercians; for he had at once betaken himself thither and craved the hospitality of the order, as much to avoid his former companions as to be near Father Anselm and Roger. It was a case of taking refuge in the nearest port, from the storm that he instinctively realised would break as soon as his new resolutions became known.

Sir Guy's death had told. Where his life in the University had had all the effect of aging him without showing it, the sudden shock had thrown him back upon himself and developed the latent manhood that had been so rapidly growing to maturity. His youthful features reflected the intensity of the mental struggles through which he had passed; and, instead of a gay, careless boy, it was a sober and a serious-eyed man who paced up and down the gardens by the Bièvre in the company of his two countrymen.

The story of Sir Guy's murder had been told again and again, with all the variety of remembered details that the re-telling of a story brings. He had the whole sad series of events before his mind as if he had been an eye-witness of the tragedy; and he brooded over it in a manner that was far from reassuring either to Father Anselm or to Roger. The former good man, having accomplished his sorrowful task of communica-

ting the news, did his best to turn the lad's mind from thinking overmuch of his loss, and to this end he spoke incessantly of his own future. Above all, he insisted on the kindly intentions of the Bishop.

"A canonry, Arnoul! It is a thing to accept, without doubt!"

"The Bishop is kindness itself," replied the lad, "but I shall not take his canonry."

"And why not, Arnoul? 'Tis a good beginning, and you would have a career before you ready mapped out. Why, there's no telling what you might not reach if you set your mind to it! It is the very thing Sir Guy would have wished for you."

Arnoul's eyes swam. He remembered his brother's great dreams and hopes unfolded to him during those last days at Woodleigh. The astrologer's head, too, seemed to nod up and down before his eyes, and his metallic voice to strike upon his ears—"Refuse nothing!" Even the good Bishop. . . . He could picture his jovial, kind face beaming with contentment at his own goodness in making such an offer. But, more than all, the words of Brother Thomas and the strong presence of Brother Thomas held him.

"Nevertheless," he repeated; "I shall not take his canonry. It is like him to offer it to me, but I cannot accept it."

"And what will you do then?" persisted Father Anselm. "What do you propose? Surely you are not thinking of joining us? How pleased Abbot Benet would be! Is that what is in your mind?"

"No," replied Arnoul. "I am not thinking of the religious life. I do not think that I am made for that. I shall just go on studying until . . . until Father Abbot comes over in the spring, and then we shall see."

Poor Father Anselm was nonplussed. He could not realise the refusal of so good an offer as that of the canonry, and he was altogether at a loss to understand what he took to be sheer uncertainty and indecision on Arnoul's part.

Roger, on the other hand, did not try to understand. Perhaps in his stolid, faithful mind he knew better than Father Anselm what Sir Guy's murder meant to the lad. But he drew him out and talked with him of his humbler friends in Devon.

"Budd is quite well," he said in answer to Arnoul's questions. "But the goodwife has got pains in her joints, and can't work as she could once."

"And the brothers at Holne and Brent?"

"They are well, too. Only some of those at Brent Moor have been moved. Brother Peter is at Buckfast now, and Brother Basil has gone back to one of the French houses."

"Old Brother Peter at Buckfast!" exclaimed Arnoul. "Why, what will he do without his sheep?"

"He will make a good death," was the answer. "Brother Peter is growing old, and can't do his work up on the moors any more. So he has gone down into the valley to make himself ready for his call."

From Buckfast they crossed easily to Woodleigh and Isobel. Where was Isobel, and what was she doing now? Arnoul asked with a sigh.

"Isobel? Why, Sir Sigar offered her a home at Moreleigh, but she would hear nothing of it. Instead, she railed at Sir Sigar to his face. He took her curses meekly and answered no word. She has gone away to Exeter, 'tis said; though I do not know, for she said nothing to me of where she was going."

"Poor old Isobel," sighed Arnoul. "She is a good,

faithful soul ; and I can understand full well how she felt when Sir Sigar offered to help her."

His face went pale as he spoke, and his mouth was hard and stern.

"Still, I think she might have gone to Moreleigh," said Roger. "Had she gone it would have seemed a sign of forgiveness for Sir Sigar. Not that I forgive him!" he put in angrily.

They spoke of all save of the Lady Sibilla. Arnoul could not bring himself to speak of her. He was too distressed, too nervous to trust her name upon his lips when speaking with Roger or Father Anselm. Only, he pictured her alone in the great hall at Moreleigh, suffering silently for her father, gathering up her woes within her patient heart, sorrowing, perhaps, for him.

Curiously enough, too, Roger never spoke of her. She seemed not to be part of that awful drama in which she must have acted. In not one of their conversations was her name so much as mentioned.

So they continued, speaking of home and of all the dear friends of far-off Devon every time they talked together, until Arnoul, having composed his spirits in the retreat of the Bernardines, and conquered the first overwhelming wave of utter melancholy, went back again to his own lodging.

The first persons he met as he made his way across the University were Maitre Louis and the alchemist Barthelemy.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked the younger man, coming up to him. "What have you been doing with yourself? I have been hunting for you at your room and all over the place. They told me you had been called out of Julien's the night you

left me at Maitre Barthelemy's house; and from that day to this no one has had a word from you."

The alchemist stood there, looking at him gravely. Arnoul saw that his right hand was hidden in his breast.

"There was news from home," he made answer; "and I have been staying at the guest-house of the Cistercians with those that brought it."

"So? I am glad, at any rate, that you are back again now from those sour-faced monks. But for this eternal dispute between the friars and the University, there is nothing doing at all. Have you heard that Maitre William's book has been denounced to the King? It is an infernal shame!"

"No, I have heard nothing. What book?" asked Arnoul. "The famous one, I suppose?"

"Yes. 'The Perils of These Last Times.' These hypocritical friars are bent upon destroying St Amour if they can manage it. King Louis has sent the copy on to the Pope to be condemned. The Dominicans have him under their thumb."

"The King is quite able to take care of himself," said Arnoul dryly; "even if he has, as everyone knows, a great esteem for the friars. He is tired of all this strife and wrangling in his capital; and he is setting to work the right way if he sends the whole quarrel on to Rome."

"And that's just what he is doing," Louis retorted angrily. "Why can't we be allowed to settle our own affairs for ourselves? Already some of the friars have been summoned to appear before the Papal Court. But the University is preparing a counter-move. Maitre William and his friends are not idle. The friars will laugh on the wrong side of their mouths when they learn

what is afoot! They are going to Rome too, with 'The Eternal Gospel' in their hands. That will open the Pope's eyes a bit, I fancy! What is more, they have found out who wrote the Introduction to that blasphemous work. Would you believe it? It was no less than Brother John of Parma himself! The late head of the Cordeliers! And, as everyone knows, the Introduction is as bad as the Gospel is, besides putting its depraved doctrines into a form that anyone can understand. But come on with us to Julien's and have a crack there! I'll tell you all about it."

"No, Maitre Louis. I'd rather not go to Julien's now," said Arnoul.

"What's come over the fellow?" asked Louis in astonishment. "Not go to Julien's? Why, my boy, you have practically lived there for months past! What's wrong with you? Come on, don't be a fool! We are going; and your Jeannette will be there waiting for you. Come on, I say!" And he clapped him on the shoulder.

Maitre Barthelemy had as yet said nothing beyond his greeting. Now, however, he joined his persuasions to those of Maitre Louis. He had been scrutinising the lad closely and had come to the conclusion that something was amiss—what, not even his wonderful facility in judging expression could tell him. "Yes," he urged. "Come with us to Julien's! I also have somewhat to speak of. The horoscope, it seems, was wrong in one detail. It is now put right, and I would signify the difference to you."

"No," persisted Arnoul. "I am on my way to my lodging. I cannot come to Julien's now."

"Cannot!" cried Louis. "What new fad is this? You are free to come and go as you please! Why won't

you act like a decent fellow and come with us when we ask you to?"

"If you really want to know," Arnoul replied, "I do not intend going to Messire Julien's tavern any more. I have been wasting my time there these months past, as you remind me, and I don't propose doing it any more."

"How now! What's all this?" cried both men. "The fellow is bewitched!"

"You're not caught by those accursed Jacobins, are you?" Louis asked suspiciously. "You're not setting yourself up as too good for the likes of us? Tell me, Arnoul! What is the matter with you?"

The alchemist's solemnity was prodigious. He nodded his great, egg-shaped head slowly like a machine, and looked unutterably sorrowful. "It is the moon in conjunction with the Tetractys!" he muttered to himself.

"No, Louis, I do not set myself up at all, though I confess I have made a great error in thinking so hardly of the friars. They have not got me in their power, never fear. . . . Or rather. . . . But you would never understand; and I could not explain it to you. My only brother, Sir Guy, the priest of Woodleigh, is dead. That is the news they brought me."

Maitre Louis composed his features to an appropriate measure of sympathy. He murmured a few words of condolence, and then begged the lad again to accompany them. "Surely it can make no difference—coming with us!"

Here Maitre Barthelemy interposed. "So! the tidings were evil? I grieve with you"—how Arnoul hated the oily commiseration—"but it cannot affect your course! 'Tis written in the heavens! This

brother, now—this priest of Woodleigh, Sir Guy—did he leave you any inheritance? Was he blessed with the goods of this world?”

On Arnoul's answering that Guy left nothing, the man seemed to lose interest.

“No,” the lad continued, “Guy left nothing at all. He had nothing to leave. And now he is dead, and I am alone. It changes everything for me. Perhaps you can see why I can't go with you to Julien's.”

“No, we can't,” was the blunt reply of Maitre Louis.

The alchemist pursed his lips together. “Young man,” he said, “it is the lot of all men to die. What matters soon or late? Your brother has died to-day. 'Twill be your turn to-morrow. Therefore enjoy yourself while you can. No death can matter to you but your own. Why, even I—unless I can wrest the hidden secret from the heart of Nature—even I shall die! But while I live, I live! Come with us now and enjoy life while it lasts!”

It had been the lad's own argument. How he shuddered as it was thus baldly recalled to him!

“No,” he reiterated, holding out his hand. “I go to my lodging. Good-bye, Louis! Good-bye, Maitre Barthelemy! Perhaps you will find that you were mistaken in me, and that I am not worth your friendship; but I am decided. I came to Paris to work, and if I have not worked yet, I am going to begin now.”

The alchemist bowed gravely, holding out his left hand, but Maitre Louis turned angrily on his heel. As they separated Arnoul heard his friend's voice calling him a conceited ass, a hypocritical Jacobin, and, worse than all, a coward. This was the beginning of his trial. He had brought it upon himself. He deserved

it. Therefore he threw his shoulders back and gritted his teeth, resolved to face it.

But there was more in store for him. No sooner had he reached the street in which he had his lodging, than he perceived a familiar figure in front of him. There was no going back. Perhaps it was as well that he should get it over at once. It was Jeannette, and she had seen him.

"Oh, Arnoul! Arnoul!" she cried. "Where have you been all this long time? What did those men want with you? Here have I been waiting for you to come back ever since you left me on that dreadful night. Had you forgotten your Jeannette?"

The tears almost trembled in the girl's eyes, though there was but one contented smile of welcome for the lad's return.

"I feared all sorts of terrible things for you. The City is so disturbed! It is full of cut-throats! I have been so frightened, Arnoul! And no one knew where you had gone!"

How hard it all was, thought the lad. Here was the girl, who seemed to have a real affection for him, waiting for him at his very door and welcoming him back!

"I received news that my brother was dead," he said simply.

"Oh! That's all!" The girl drew her brows together carelessly. "I'm sorry! But you're back again now, so nothing matters much. We'll go over to Julien's. Come!" And she made to take him by the arm.

Her heartless words made what he had to do less difficult.

"No. I am not going to Julien's now or any more, Jeannette," he said, drawing away from her.

"What do you mean?" asked the girl blankly.

"What I say. I'm not going to waste any more time drinking, and dicing, and making love at the tavern. God knows, I've wasted too much there already!"

"Not going to waste time drinking . . . and dicing . . . and making love," she repeated slowly, with a pause between each word. "Have you joined the monks that you speak like that? What has come to you, Arnoul?"

"Nothing; except that my brother is dead, and I see that I have not been living as I should. . . . Now I intend to apply myself to study, and to make up for lost time."

The colour came in the girl's cheeks and her eyes flashed ominously. "So you will desert Messire Julien and us?"

"Yes."

"And cut me adrift?"

"I must be at my work, Jeannette."

"You mean to do this?"

"Yes."

"You accursed clerk!" she hissed at him, realising that he intended to do as he said. "You sneaking hypocrite! You are setting yourself up as a saint when everyone knows what you really are! How they will howl at you at Julien's—the Boiteux and the rest! But you're not going to desert us, are you? It's not some other girl who's prettier than me?" she asked jealously. "Oh, Englishman—Arnoul! You cannot mean what you are saying! I have not understood you! I am dreaming! I shall awake! Oh, yes I shall awake, to find you at my side once more!"

"Jeannette! I must be honest. Can't you see that it may never be again as it was? I . . . am a clerk. And you. . . . Just God! Don't you see how difficult it is for me to say it?"

"But you are mine, Arnoul! Mine from the very womb of eternity! Of all the students in the University . . . of all the burghers of the Town . . . I think but of you! Cast me not off! You are pledged to me! Oh, sacredest of ties!"

He cut her short—brutally, finally. "Girl," he said, "you rave! I mean what I have said—every word of it. Never shall I go again to the wine-house! Never shall I. . . . Pah! I have done with it! I break . . . I have broken with the life at Julien's . . . with all those associates! I. . . ."

The girl was looking at him from under lowering brows, biting her lips, her nails. Then, seeing the sternness and the careworn lines upon Arnoul's face, and realising that he was in deadly earnest, she began to revile him again.

"A saint! A saint! A pretty saint you will make! Why, I remember when you struck Maitre Jacques—a clerk too—in a fit of rage! That's nice work for a saint, isn't it? Oh, you pig! You sneak! Yes! And how often have you been blind drunk, I should like to know, pig? And your fine red cloak and your swaggering airs! Oh no! You may discard me and you may shun us all, but I'll make you smart for it, my fine fellow! Oh, you disgusting pig! You cowardly clerk! You filthy saint!"

She was furious; and Arnoul, white to the lips, knew that he deserved some, at least, of her railing.

"Is it the damnable friars that have got at you and made you a saint? Oh, the friars with their baskets and their downcast eyes, their drawling psalms and their pious speeches! A fine saint they'll make of you! We are going to light a fire for the friars. I shall see you at the stake yet, saint. The professors

won't stand their sham humility any longer and they're going to bring the shavelings to their deserts! Oh yes! Accursed pig of a saint!" And she spat at him.

He bent his head and listened to it all patiently, until she attacked the friars. Then—"Peace, girl!" he said. "The religious are not for such as you or I to abuse."

But she continued, her voice ever growing louder, until a little crowd had collected in the narrow street, and heads were poked out of windows far above them. It was his hour of humiliation and must be borne.

"What is the matter?" asked one ill-favoured hag of another.

"How should I know; save that the clerk yonder is the Englishman who lodges with old mother Evelinne la Boucele?" the crone replied. "Let us cross over and ask Evelinne herself. There she is at the door yonder. She is sure to know. It looks like some stupid row between the Englishman and a girl."

Old mother Evelinne did not know what the cause of the trouble was, but she was well aware of the fact that Jeannette had been hanging about the place for days past. So she let her tongue wag, and the three old women wove the threads of scandal to their hearts' content, while the girl screamed and swore and railed and cursed at the unfortunate Arnoul standing pale and with bowed head in the middle of the gathering crowd.

"Come now, mistress! What's all this pother?" asked a burly fellow as he shouldered his way through the throng of people. "What's the clerk been doing to you, that you scream like this? Shut your mouth, girl! Don't you see it's a clerk and an Englishman you're railing at? An Englishman—and so am I! Hola, there, Maitre Arnoul of the English Nation! 'Tis

I, Gerard the German! Out of the way, you shrieking fiend! Out of the way there! Be silent! Get you gone!"

The huge German turned his red face upon the crowd, swinging a cudgel above his head. "What are you gaping at, you moon-struck idiots?" he shouted. "Have you never seen a clerk of Paris before, or a frenzied woman? Be off with you! Disperse! Clear the roadway! *Instanter! Instantius! Instantissime!* Or I make my oaken stick crack upon your hollow pates!"

The effect of his words was marvellous. The crowd, for the most part composed of women, melted into space. Even Jeannette had paused in her cursing, and was making off down the narrow street before the fierce German's threatening cudgel.

"Aha! That's right!" he said, with a laugh. "There they go, the rabble, and that shrill-voiced vixen with them. Come, comrade! What's to do? Have you been lightening the wench's purse? No? A little love affair, perhaps, gone awry? No? Then what the devil is it? She has fine eyes, your fair reviler! God's blood! I shall follow her myself, and see where she is going! No thanks, comrade! We of the English Nation should always stand together when the need may be! I have rid you of a shrieking termagant with glorious eyes. Perchance I can keep her in better fettle! I go to see! Farewell! Another time, perhaps, you will render me a service." And he followed the retreating figure of Jeannette before it was lost sight of in the turning of the Tuileries. Arnoul, conscious of eyes looking down upon him from the windows, made his way towards his door, and, passing the three old hags who had taken refuge within it, he mounted the steps to his own chamber. He was humiliated beyond

measure. Moreover, he was ashamed—thoroughly ashamed of himself and of the low part he had, perforce, had to play in the sordid quarrel. He cast himself down disconsolate upon his pallet. So it was come to this, he thought. To be upbraided in the public street and cursed and spit upon! It was all his own fault. He realised it. But oh! the ignominy of those bending eyes, that common crowd! And he had brought it all upon himself! “Oh, Guy, Guy!” he thought within himself. “What can I do without you?”

Then he lifted the reliquary from his bosom and prayed. In all his drifting he had kept Sibilla’s gift, that splinter from the Holy Rood, upon his person. His prayer and his thoughts of Sibilla calmed him. Was he to find peace, now that he had broken with Louis and Maitre Barthelemy, now that Gerard the German had undertaken to deal with Jeannette? His mind ran on, humiliated and stunned, despairing and hopeful by turns.

Below, the three crones discussed the tumult. “He has cast her off without doubt,” said Ameline la Grasse. “And she will have her revenge upon him for it. I saw it in her flashing eye.”

“No, that’s not it,” retorted Maheut la Boque. “I know the girl well by sight. She is Jeannette aux Blanches Mains. Everyone knows her. She is a public nuisance. I remember——”

“You are both wrong, I am quite sure,” spoke the lodging-keeper. “Maitre Arnoul is not the man to take up with a girl and then cast her off. I know him. Who better, since he lives with me? Why, I charge him well for his lodging, and he pays regularly, never grumbles, mark you, nor threatens to call upon the

Rector to lower my terms." The three hags nodded in chorus. They well knew what that meant; for the Rector of the University had the power of adjudicating as to the charges of the lodging-house keepers and arbitrarily lowering them if necessary.

"Still," insisted Ameline, "one knows these English. They walk about as if they owned the whole earth. The girl seems to be a good and pious child. She is a Parisian, no doubt of it. Why should these foreigners come here to ride roughshod over our citizens, I should like to know? The English are the worst of the lot."

"Nay, Mistress Ameline, I assure you you are wrong. The girl is well known. One only had to listen to her just now to know how pious she is. Ho! Ho! She has set her cap at this Englishman, and, failing to secure him, she heaps him with reproaches and curses. No! That's a new piety, that is! Don't tell me!"

"You are a fool, Maheut, though you are my crony! I know better," retorted Ameline. "I know well what these Englishmen are. Have I not had lodgings let in the University for thirty years gone? Take my advice, Mistress Evelinne, and get rid of the Englishman before you have further trouble! I know what I am talking about! Get rid of him, I say! Pitch him out, neck and crop!"

"But I know quite well that he is quiet and peaceable here. There has never been a fracas before. He never brings crowds of rowdy scholars home with him as some of them do—I know it to my cost! The girl—what's her name?—Blanches Mains? She never came before till now."

"Never mind, Mistress Evelinne! You know better than I do, of course! I who have had more scholars than both of you twice over! Still waters run deep,

Mistress Evelinne! Depend upon it that your Englishman is not what you think! You will have trouble with him one of these days, never fear. Has he any money? Does he pay you well?"

"I just told you that he pays regularly—or, that is, he did. He owes me now for a few weeks."

"What I told you! You will whistle for the good *sols Parisis*!"

"No! No! He will pay right enough!"

"Go and ask him then. If he doesn't pay you, turn him out! I know these Englishmen! I know all scholars!" The old hag chuckled and showed her yellow teeth vindictively, as though she had a spite against all the clerks in the University. "Don't tell me! I know them and how they live, from hand to mouth!"

"But I tell you he has always paid——"

"Go and ask for your money! Just look at his clothes and his face! I'll warrant he has sold all he has to dine with Blanchés Mains!"

"Perhaps," suggested Maheut, "Ameline is right. She has experience—not that you and I haven't experience too. But it's as well to be safe. You had better go and ask him for the money."

The insistence of the two women impressed Evelinne more than their arguments. She began to waver; and, when they had left with a parting shot at clerks in general and Englishmen in particular, she climbed up the stair to Arnoul's door. As it was shut, the old hag listened prudently for a time, wondering what the Englishman was doing. Evidently he was not moving about or speaking to himself; but she managed to catch now and then a sound as of a low groan. That was bad! Things went wrong when one groaned!

Mistress Ameline was possibly right! She would see!

She thumped on the crazy door with her fist. It was not barred, and it sprang open as she touched it. There was Arnoul sitting on his pallet with his head on his hands. He looked up suddenly. Could it be that Jeannette had come back again? No. It was only old Evelinne the lodging-keeper.

"I am come, Maitre Englishman," she began, "for the small matter of money that is owing me." He put his hand to his empty purse; and then, remembering that he had come away without thinking of asking Father Anselm for the money the Abbot had sent him, told the woman of his plight. "You shall have it, mistress," he said, "but not now. I have no money here to give you; but you shall be paid in full ere long."

"No, Englishman. I must have my money now. You must pay me at once! Here you've been away for days—I know not where—and you already owe me a good round sum."

"But, mistress, I tell you I have no money now. I cannot give you what I have not got."

"Then you shall quit my house, you beggarly Englishman! Here you have come swaggering about in fine clothes and dancing in and out, and now you refuse to pay a poor, hard-working woman her honest money."

"But I have always paid you, mistress," said Arnoul sadly. All his troubles seemed to crowd in upon him at once. "And you shall be paid, believe me. Only I cannot pay you now."

"Can't pay me? But you shall pay me!" she screamed. And then, catching sight of the gleam of gold and stretching out her bony fingers towards the

reliquary, "What's that?" she cried. "That will do! Give me that! I will take that for your lodging!"

But Arnoul snatched the relic from her grasp, springing up from the pallet bed. He would have parted with life itself before he relinquished his relic.

The woman came nearer, the greed of gold shining in her withered eyes, and strove to take it from him. He resisted her gently enough, for he was afraid to put forth his great strength and hurl the old crone from him. She had her hand now upon his breast where he had placed the golden box. The touch was sacrilège, and he thrust her violently from him. Then she tried new tactics. Going to the window, she began to scream for help in a shrill, quavering shriek. "Murder! Murder! Help!" she cried.

The lad realised that in a few moments the place would be full of heaven knew what sort of people, and without a further thought he left the room and tore down the stairs into the street. Evelinne was still shrieking from above. Good! She had not heard him fly. The crowd was gathering fast enough, but since the shrieks still cut through the air, no one would dream of connecting them with him. He made off hurriedly down the street, his hand clasped over his reliquary, making himself as inconspicuous as possible.

When he reached the great street of St Jacques he paused, standing irresolute, wondering what he should do. Where should he go? What was his next move to be? He felt desolate and lonely as he looked up and down the long, straight road. Though it was full of the hurrying forms of the scholars, he realised that he was one single unit out of touch with all the rest. He was an outcast, a man without a home, friendless and solitary. A revulsion of feeling

swept over him, a great wave of disgust and loathing of himself.

"Why, Maitre Arnoul, what are you doing here? It is an age since I have seen you." A familiar voice broke upon his ears.

"Doing? Nothing," he answered wearily, turning to find Maitre Giles at his elbow.

"Where are you going, then? And, good gracious! what is the matter with you?" asked Giles, looking in wonder at his white face.

"I don't know," answered Arnoul blankly. "I have just been turned out of my room."

"Turned out? What do you mean? Why have you been turned out?"

The clerk told his story simply and baldly, making no excuses. He felt that he had to unburden himself to someone, even if it were Maitre Giles. When he had made an end Giles turned to him impulsively. For all his faults, he was a kind-hearted fellow; and he saw the strait that Arnoul was in. Perhaps he thought there was a chance here of snatching a brand from the burning.

"Come back again with me to St Victor's," he said kindly. "They will welcome you there, I am sure."

But Arnoul hung back. It would be far more difficult to face the scholars he had left at St Victor's than to break with the companions of his extern days. It would be coming back like a beaten hound, tail between legs.

"Come!" urged Maitre Giles. "We shall all be glad to have you back, you know. Of course you'll feel a little strange at first, but that'll be over in a day or so. Have you left anything at your lodgings?"

And learning that Arnoul had come away leaving clothes and parchments behind him, he added good-naturedly: "That will be all right. You need not bother your head about them. I'll go and get them for you and bring them on to St Victor's. As for the money, why, I'll lend it to you. I'll see that the harri-dan's paid. When I've finished with her she'll leave you in peace, I fancy! But you come along with me to the Abbey now! Come back to St Victor's!" The little man passed his arm through Arnoul's and led him away unresisting. Such kindness! thought the lad brokenly. How he had misjudged everything and everyone! Here was Maitre Giles, whom he had disliked and despised as a man of no spirit, leading him back to the canons at the Abbey!

On the way he listened to vivid accounts of the mental unrest that was the one topic of conversation in the University. With tact Giles avoided speaking of himself; and by the time they had reached the gate of St Victor's Arnoul began to feel more at ease and less fearful of the interview with the good canons.

They passed together, arm-in-arm, into the monastery.

CHAPTER XXIII

ARNOUL LOSES A FRIEND

ALTHOUGH St Victor's, strictly speaking, belonged neither to the seculars nor to the friars, but to the canons, it was inevitable that the strife that was so rapidly coming to a climax should make itself almost as profoundly felt within the walls that bounded the Abbey as in the greater University without. Arnoul, it is true, had set himself to work diligently at his interrupted studies, and was careful to fill up the time unoccupied by classes with the compilation of his notes or reading of texts in the scriptorium. In thus occupying himself he found the best anodyne for his grief; and by degrees, as time wore its sharp edge away, he found himself taking up again the life of routine that he had lived before leaving the shelter of the monastery for the freer life of an extern student.

Still he could not close his ears to the common topic of conversation. Canons and scholars alike were full of it. They had nothing else to talk about, and from morning until night they discussed the extraordinary state of tension that prevailed in the University. Although it was a body corporate, it was also in a remarkable degree composed of heterogeneous and discordant elements—elements that threatened at any moment to come into such acute conflict that no possible *modus vivendi* could be devised to keep them together even in appearance. The canons were as alive to the actual state of things as anyone else, and the scholars living at St Victor's

were naturally much exercised as to the issue of a struggle that had been maturing for years and was now coming to a head under their very eyes.

Of the twelve public chairs, three only were in the possession of the secular party. From this point of view the situation was an intolerable one. The University had grown up gradually from the original nucleus of the Carolingian schools, shaping itself naturally around the Cathedral. It was, therefore, quite right and proper that the Mother Church of Paris should be represented upon the official teaching staff. Three chairs were obviously due to the canons of Notre Dame. That was clearly a fair arrangement, since the schools had begun there. But these interloping friars had captured too much. It was a crying abuse that they should have so many professors; and any means, fair or foul, were to be adopted in order to cure the evil and bring the preponderance of power once more into the hands of the secular clerks.

On the other hand, there was the contention of the friars. The University was not a close corporation in the sense the seculars contended, but one in which merit came to the fore. Moreover, it was a papal University, and the friars were—it was well known—held in the greatest esteem by Pope Alexander as well as by King Louis. Why should a man be forbidden to hold a chair because he professed poverty or was a member of a religious order? Some of the most brilliant teachers that Paris had yet seen had been friars. Moreover, they were in possession of the chairs; and possession is nine points of the law.

But there was a further reason accounting for the strife that no one seemed to notice. To the clash of principles and the jealousies of the individual doctors

might be added the vague, premonitory stirrings of a society that was about to undergo a profound change. This war of factions in the University of Paris in the thirteenth century was an expression, an indication, of a changing order of things. It was the struggle of old institutions against new ones, and its farthest-reaching effects were to be the foundations of a new social order in Europe. Where the intellect of the University led the whole civilised world would follow.

Living in the thick of it all, and hearing opinions expressed on every hand, it was practically impossible for anyone to view the situation calmly and impartially. Opinion ran too strong, ideas surged too high, to make for impartial judgment; and Arnoul, who had cast in his lot with the seculars before, now sided quite as strongly against them. Things moved quickly in those days—so quickly that before one had time to throw one's thoughts and impressions into any clear or definite form, the premises had shifted and the conclusion drawn from them was found to be worthless.

Brother Thomas of St Jacques, whom he now knew, had taken the place in his esteem that Maitre Louis had formerly secured for William of St Amour; and the scholars whose company he most frequented were as stout defenders of the friars as Louis and his little coterie were of the seculars.

But his mind, notwithstanding that the air was full of it, was not altogether taken up with the dispute. He had obtained leave for Roger to come and live at St Victor's, in return for work that he would do for the canons; and never a day passed but the two were found together talking, their minds far away from Paris and its problems. On feast days they walked together through the town, or out, through the gates, into the

green fields, exploring. There was much of interest to be seen in this bustling hive of human life besides the townspeople and the scholars. There were other things than schools and pageants, brawls and religious ceremonies. There were the buildings that were springing up everywhere in wonderful profusion. There was the great Cathedral ; and, though building operations were yet actually in progress there, its nave was undoubtedly one of the finest structures in Europe. The choir was hidden in scaffolding, for the masons were at work upon it, and the south porch had not yet been begun. But the façade and towers stood up grandly, frowning down over all Paris, solemn and watchful. The placid stone saints gazed out from their niches in the arching doorways, and the stone kings looked down gravely from their twenty-eight pedestals upon the City over which they had ruled. It was a front solemn and grandiose, flanked by its two great towers, one on either side ; a nation, a history, a theology, carved in stone ; the life of a people caught up and crystallised for all time. No other age could have produced it, for it was above all things the expression of the age, saturated with mystical piety, heavy with national aspirations, sombrely religious, lightly speculative, intensely earnest, held and bound all together in the relentless logic of proportion and proper subordination, part to part. It was the ideal towards which the social restlessness strove, an ideal dreamt of and pondered upon and then carved out of the real heart-throbbings of souls and set up for all ages to gaze upon as the embodiment of the religion and patriotism of a bygone day. And inside the building, when the two Englishmen went up the steps and passed under the central portal, in the dark effulgence of its vast spaces they saw the monuments and statues that

a pious, if a misguided, art had raised. At the eastern end the altar, one mass of golden reliquaries and shrines, one glow of colour and jewelled splendour, caught and held the eye. The tall waxen torches rose from a wealth of gleaming metal and flashing stones. Roger wondered awestruck and admired open-mouthed. There were people in the church, too—people moving about and curiously examining the statues in the nave. Some workmen were setting a recumbent waxen effigy in its place. And there were people at their devotions, kneeling forms busy before one of the many shrines or the representation of a saint; people standing before the high altar, lost in meditation; people leaning against pillars and gazing about them. All the while a monotonous chant fell upon the ear. The canons were saying their office in the distance.

There were other buildings, too, to see; abbeys and priories, churches and palaces; besides the beauty of the countryside, when one left the walls of University or Town behind and rambled far out into the fields and woods along the river. Thus Arnoul found time to guide Roger through Town and City, visiting and explaining to the open-mouthed man of Devon all that there was to see in Paris. And Roger took it all in, in a stolid kind of way, sharpening his wits slowly and adding by degrees to his native shrewdness the astute outlook that comes from living among men in large cities. But the two were never happier than when talking of home, speaking of the old and golden days, and making the loved ones live once more in their conversation.

By this time Arnoul had received from Father Anselm the money that was to carry him on until Abbot Benet's next visit in the spring. It was not

much, but it had sufficed to pay all his debts, and leave him with a little in hand ; enough, if he was careful—and after all there was no need for him to be extravagant—to last him well into the next year.

But while he was thus doing his utmost to retrieve what he had lost in the matter of his studies and living over with Roger the happy days of his boyhood, events were crowding thick and fast upon each other's heels in the University. Brother Thomas, though Arnoul had visited him more than once since he had returned to St Victor's, never alluded in any way to the state of things in the schools. He gave himself up entirely to the matter in hand, helping and advising the lad to the utmost of his power ; and he had the satisfaction of seeing that his kindness and good advice were bearing fruit. Arnoul had settled down quietly to as studious and as peaceful a life as the distracted condition of things would permit. Only Brother Thomas had his fears—though he never made them known to the boy—that such an even tenor would not last. His resolutions were bound to be put to the test sooner or later. He would come across his old associates. He would find a loathing of a regular and ordered life grow up within him, an overwhelming desire to go back to his former way. So he encouraged Arnoul to come to him and gave him what help he could, preparing him and strengthening him for a future storm of temptation and difficulty that he foresaw would rage in the lad's soul.

The spring had lengthened out into summer when the first crisis made itself felt. They were standing, a party of the scholars of St Victor's, in the Abbey gardens, discussing the latest turn of events.

"So, they're going to move at last," said Maitre Giles, with the air of a man who has much knowledge

in reserve and is quite ready to impart it to all and sundry. "So, they're going to move at last."

"No! What's the latest?"

"You know King Louis sent the 'Perils' to Rome?"

"Pah! That's stale news! Why, one knew that weeks ago!"

"And the Pope will examine it."

"So it would be supposed," said the scholar superciliously. "Why do you think that the King sent it, otherwise? Tell us something fresh!"

"Well, no one knows what the decision will be. The regulars are confident of a condemnation and the seculars just as sure of——"

"Oh, come! We all know that. If you have no better things to tell us, we might as well——"

"Don't you be too sure! You *sententarii* are always in such a hurry! That is a vice of young men. If you'll only listen, I'll tell you all about it," drawled the first speaker.

"What is it then?"

"Giles has found out something. He's a regular ferret!"

"Boh! I don't believe he knows any more than we do!"

"Give the man a chance to speak!"

"As I was saying," Maitre Giles resumed, leisurely addressing the little crowd of scholars. "As I was about to explain, when you interrupted me, they are going to move at last."

"And what have they been doing, I should like to know?"

"You said that before!"

"Who's going to move?"

"Will you keep silence? I say they are going to

move. *Who?* Why, the friars of course, you booby! Who else? Haven't they been patient enough and for long enough, I should like to know? Haven't they endured all that flesh and blood can stand for months past? Well, they are going to fight now—fight with a vengeance; and, if I mistake not, they are going to win too."

"Fight?"

"How can they win against the University?"

"They won't win! Why, they've got the best logicians of the world against them. What can they hope to do against St Amour?"

"So? They've got the logicians, have they? What of Maitre Albert? What do you say to Brother Thomas?"

"But the case is tried at Rome, isn't it? What's the good of the ponderous Albert or even young Aquinas, if they're not there?"

"You go too fast, my friend! The book is to be examined at Anagni, not at Rome, in the first place. Our holy Lord the Pope is at Anagni. And Master Albert is at Anagni too. Perhaps you didn't know that, eh? So is Brother Bonaventure, the new Franciscan general. Is that news to you?"

"That's better!"

"Why didn't you say so at once?"

"How can a man say everything in one breath?" asked Maitre Giles. "Give me time and I shall tell you all."

"Well, tell us then. What's going to happen? What's the new move? Anything will be better than this perpetual bickering."

Arnoul had pricked up his ears when he heard the name of Brother Thomas mentioned. He edged

through the little knot of *sententiarii* and *biblici* closer to Maitre Giles.

"You must understand," continued that worthy, "that when the libel was taken by the two doctors of the King to our most holy Father the Pope Alexander, he caused it to be examined by his cardinals."

"And they have condemned it?" asked one of the *sententiarii* eagerly.

"How could they have condemned it before they had examined it?" retorted Maitre Giles magisterially. "You young men are altogether too quick. You jump at conclusions. Now, you ought to be aware that the reading of such a book requires time. The Cardinals—I have heard that there is a commission of four appointed—are even now reading it. But that is not my news. There's much more than that. You remember the council of bishops assembled here this spring?"

"Of course we do!"

"How forget it? The two provinces of Rheims and Sens—fourteen bishops at least."

"Weren't they a fine show, with all their attendants and trappings?"

"Never mind the show," continued Maitre Giles imperturbably. "You know what they did?"

"Held a provisional council, of course. What else would they do?"

"A great deal else. They tried to settle this dispute."

"We know that!"

"That's not new!"

"Get to the point, Maitre Giles!"

"I'm getting to the point, if you will only wait a bit! You know that William stayed for the council, though he had just been named canon and ought by rights to have gone to take his stall at Beauvais? You remember

that he was ready to accept its ruling and justify what he had preached and taught concerning the friars? Well, it all came to nothing because Brother Humbert, the General of the Preachers, refused to abide by its decisions and referred himself and his cause to the Pope. And then King Louis sent St Amour's book to Rome by the hands of Maitre Pierre and Maitre Jean?"

"Yes, we know all that."

"Well, here's something you don't know! Brother Humbert made off as fast as he could for Anagni, where Pope Alexander now is, to look after the matter himself. He has kept Master Albert there for a year now, nearly, because he foresaw the struggle that was coming. Brother Bonaventure is there, as General of the Cordeliers. And now—it's the very latest news—they have sent for Brother Thomas too. Don't you see? There's bound to be a battle—a big battle. And the strongest and ablest men of the two orders are being mustered on the battlefield. What foresight! What diplomacy! If they had tried to fight it out here, the contest would have lasted through another thirty years of squabbling and bickering. We're too hot here—right in the middle of it all! Now, don't you understand, they've shifted it all to the Roman Court. They've taken it to the Pope, who is directly over the University; and they're going to have a settlement once for all. You'll see, they'll come back with their chairs confirmed to them, stronger than ever. And the strongest weapon they have to fight with is that book of St Amour's. Mark my words! You'll see that I am right! And you won't have to wait very long to see, either!"

Arnoul edged up quietly to the speaker.

"Is Brother Thomas going to leave Paris?" he asked, almost in a whisper. It meant so much to him to know

that the strong presence of the gentle friar was near at hand.

"Oh, 'tis you, Arnoul! Yes. He is certainly going to set out for Anagni."

"Does he go at once?" the lad asked again, in a still lower tone of voice.

"Why, what's the matter, Arnoul? Of course he leaves at once—within two days, I heard."

"And I never knew," murmured the Englishman to himself, but not so low that the sharp ears of Maitre Giles did not catch what he said.

"And why should you be acquainted with the fact, I should like to know, Arnoul? The news is not known in the University yet. I had it from . . . but what matters where I had it? It is true enough, at all events. Don't look so down-hearted, lad! What difference can it make to you? Brother Thomas is a great man, but he is not the only one in the University—nor the only friar, for the matter of that!"

"Oh, I can't explain it all, Giles! Brother Thomas has been so good to me. He told me to come and see him whenever I wanted to."

Maitre Giles pricked up his ears. Here was treasure trove! A familiar with one of the leading characters in the great drama that was about to be played at the Papal Court! Arnoul was at once invested with a new importance in his eyes. He had not known of his intimacy with Brother Thomas of Aquin; for Arnoul, in this, had been reticent. His friendship with the professor of St Jacques was almost too sacred to be spoken of.

"Come," said Maitre Giles to the lad, "I have no more news. Let us walk up and down the cloister! So you know Brother Thomas well, Arnoul?"

"Well? No, Giles. But he has been very good and kind to me in my trouble."

"Why, how did he know anything about it?"

"I went to him," answered the lad simply, "when I heard of Guy's death. You yourself had told me so much about him in the old days that, when I was in trouble, I thought of him almost at once."

"And did he speak to you of the state of the University?"

"No, Giles. He said nothing of himself or of the troubles in Paris. Only he listened to me and gave me help. It seemed as though he had only me to think of. He gave himself up so entirely to my poor affairs."

"So you know nothing from him about the crisis?"

"Nothing, Giles."

"Still, you have formed an opinion of the man? What do you think of him?"

"And what is my opinion worth, Giles? You know him too, or you could not have made such an impression upon me that, when I was in sore trouble, I went at once to him."

"No. I have never even spoken to Brother Thomas," said Maitre Giles, grudgingly. "I have heard him, of course," he added quickly, "and I have formed my opinion from what I have heard. But spoken to him, no—that is, only once. I remember taking an objection to him after one of his classes to be solved."

"And he explained it for you?"

"Yes."

"And spoke to you as if there was nothing in the whole world but you and your objection?"

"Yes."

"That was like him. I went to him when Father

Anselm brought me the news of Guy's death. I told him all . . . all there was to tell of myself. And he saved me from myself. Giles, but for Brother Thomas, I don't know where I should be now."

"No! You don't say so!" said Maitre Giles. "What a sly fellow you are, after all, to be in hand and glove, as it were, with so great a personage as Brother Thomas and never say a word of it to anyone, not even to me!"

"What was the use, Giles, of speaking of it? But your news upsets me dreadfully. It really does. I must go at once to St Jacques and see him."

"But he'll never see you now! Just think how busy he must be, if he is to set out to-morrow!"

"Still, I shall go. And I think he won't leave Paris without seeing me. I hope not, at any rate. Good-bye, Giles. I shall go at once."

The great door of the friary had not ceased resounding to his knock when the old porter opened the grille.

"So it's you here again," he muttered, unfastening the bolts. "One might have known you would be turning up like this, as soon as the good news got abroad. You come to see Brother Thomas? Well, he can't see you. He is busy."

"Oh, Brother! Do ask him if he can spare me just a moment."

"It's no use," grumbled the porter, stumping off down the corridor. "Why, everyone in Paris wants to see Brother Thomas to-day. How can he find time to see everybody, I should like to know? No. The Englishman will have to wait till he is back again."

But he returned, none the less, in a few moments, to

tell Arnoul that the Brother would receive him, and at once.

Thomas of Aquin was alone in his cell. There was no trace of disorder in the room, no sign of haste or flurry in its occupant. On the contrary, Brother Thomas was as calm and as tranquil as ever, his cell exactly the same as when Arnoul had last entered it. As a matter of fact, the great teacher had given his lessons as usual, as though nothing had happened, had interviewed his visitors, and was in the act of preparing his matter for the morrow's lecture, when Arnoul arrived.

"Ah, my child ; so you have learnt that I am ordered to Italy ?"

"Yes, Brother. 'Tis that that brings me here at this hour. I have heard that you were to leave to-morrow, and came at once. What am I to do when you are gone, Brother, without your support and help ?"

"Do? Why, my child, what you have been doing these weeks past." And Brother Thomas smiled encouragingly.

"Still, Brother, it will be hard. It has been hard, but it will be all the harder when you are gone. I have so learnt to count upon you."

"There is Someone else on whom you must count, now more than ever, my child, if you would be steadfast. What help I have been able to bring to you has been but little. We must all lean upon Him. When you are happy, my son, pray ; and thank God for your happiness. When you are in trouble, pray again. And, above all, when the trial is sharpest, pray—pray fervently. It is by prayer alone that we conquer."

"But when you are gone, Brother. . . ."

"God remains, my son. Put your trust in Him. He will not fail you."

“And yourself, Brother?”

“I am ordered to appear before our holy Lord the Pope ‘Lo, Thy enemies, O Lord, and they that hate Thee have lifted up their head. They have taken evil counsel against Thy people and consulted together against Thy saints.’”

“To defend the religious, Brother?”

“Yes, my son. We are compassed about and pressed upon every side. Here, in the University, we are made the butt of coarse wit and bitter words. We are persecuted and set upon by the ungodly.”

“Ah, Brother, who does not know it? That accursed Canon William——”

“Peace, my son! Do not curse that misguided man. Pray for him rather, that he may cease to persecute the children of God.”

“But he is accursed for his treatment of the religious, Brother!”

“Who are we to judge, my son? We are not all perfect. No, we are far from perfect. ‘Love your enemies,’ we are bidden.” He rose to his full height, the very embodiment of tranquillity of soul and peace of mind. What were these squabbles, these underhand sowings of discord, these overt attacks upon all that he held most dear, to the mind of Thomas of Aquin? He rose above them, superior to them, untroubled by them. It was the first, and indeed the only, occasion upon which he ever spoke of them to Arnoul.

“My son,” he said tenderly, thinking once more of the lad and his troubles, “I leave to-morrow. Put all your trust in God; and when I return I shall find that all is well with you. But be on your guard, and pray for me and the mission I have to do. May the Lord have you

in His keeping, Arnoul! In all your works and ways may He watch over you and protect you!"

He signed the lad's forehead with the cross, and Arnoul left him sadly, wondering why so great a strength and consolation should have been vouchsafed to him for a time, only to be withdrawn while he still had so much need of it.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CHIEF OF THE SECULARISTS

HOT foot upon the departure of Brother Thomas for Anagni followed the secular doctors. The appeal was taken to Rome. Well, to Rome should they go too, not only to defend themselves against the arrogance of these interloping friars, but to fasten upon them the heretical doctrines contained in the "Eternal Gospel" as well.

The whole University, not to speak of the Town of Paris, was in an uproar. Seldom, if ever, in the history of the schools, had a time of such intense excitement been known. No one living, at any rate, was able to remember anything approaching it. It was war to the death now—war between the secular party, the party that stood fast to its old traditions and its laxity of teaching, and the religious, the upstart element of discord that brought in new and strange changes of order while professing the most unbending rigidity in matters of doctrine.

It was, had they but realised the eternal nature of the struggle, Plato pitted against Aristotle, Abelard against Bernard, the spirit of licence, tricked out in the habiliments of orthodoxy and reason, against the incarnation of orthodoxy, clad in the flaunting cloak of rationalism and novelty. But few, if indeed any, realised to the full the bearings of the contest, or the great sequence of practical effects that were inextricably mixed up with its issue.

The frairs were on their mettle. They had not only the prestige of their orders to defend. The entire principle of the religious life was involved in the attack that was made upon them. On the other hand, the privileges of the corporate body of the University were threatened. So the seculars urged, and, from their point of view, with some reason.

On August the fifth, William of St Amour descended from the pulpit from which he had been addressing a large and excited crowd of University officials and scholars. The day was a broiling hot one; and the preacher, heated still further by the efforts of his oratorical vehemence, mopped the beads of perspiration from his brow. His thin, sallow face was flushed, two bright patches burning red upon his cheeks, and his great eyes glowed like live coals. Earnest as he appeared, the cruel lines that drooped about his lips and the haughty contraction of his brows gave him more the air of an egoist than of an ascetic, and there was a suggestion of shiftiness that made itself felt, rather than showed, in his features.

His audience was still applauding him—a grateful sound in the great doctor's ears as he left the building and made his way through a short, closed passage to a chamber attached to the church. Evidently he had some business afoot, for, though he left the door ajar, he at once unfastened a small, wooden chest and began arranging a series of parchments that he took from it. There were several of these parchments covered with heavy writing and sealed with leaden bulls. Also there were two books—the one a thick volume unwrapped, the other carefully tied up in a sheepskin wrapping. This latter he untied and laid with the parchments upon

the table. He gazed upon it long, a sneering smile upon his features, his eyes contracting in an ugly fashion. Then he continued his task of taking out and arranging the parchments. While he was thus occupied, pausing from time to time to scrutinise one of the writings more closely, or to listen for an instant to the hum of voices that he knew were speaking of him and of his discourse, steps came to the door and three men entered. He went on with his work, acknowledging their salutations and speaking with them over his shoulder.

"That was a fine discourse, Maitre William," said Maitre Christian, Canon of Beauvais. The two others were the Maitres Odo of Douai and Nicholas of Bar. "A fine discourse, truly, and one that will secure the whole University for us, I am sure."

Maitre William smiled inwardly, but he said with a great show of humility: "Too weak, too weak, Maitre Christian, for the work! Besides, we have the University already on our side. 'Tis these cursed friars with their tricks before the Pope that we have to fear now."

"Ah!" said Odo slowly, in his heavy, solemn voice. "You said truly! That is to fear! Still, we are a powerful corporation, even for Pope Alexander to upset. What says the letter, Maitre William?"

"Our instructions? Here they are," answered St Amour, selecting an unsealed parchment from the pile before him. "They are informal. Read for yourself! You see that a collection has been made through the University for the expenses of our mission, that we are to strive to the utmost to win back our professorial chairs from the friars, to oust them from any official standing or position in the schools, and finally, to obey the Pope in as far as God and Justice permit us. That

leaves a fairly large margin, you perceive, for individual methods, and putting pressure on the judges."

"Um! Yes, that is it. The paper mentions the other two deputies also. Where are they? They ought to be here by now."

"Belin and Gecteville? They meet us when we set out," replied St Amour. "At least, so it was arranged. They may turn up here of course. They know we planned this meeting. But there's no real need why they should come."

"We shall have a difficult task, I fear, when we reach Anagni," began Nicholas of Bar. "Think of all the opponents we shall have. And they say that King Louis will support the friars through thick and thin. He has made the strongest representations to the Pope. And Alexander is quite prepared to stand by them if he can see his way to doing so."

"That for the King!" retorted William, wheeling round upon the speaker and snapping his fingers. "He is a weak puppet, letting things in his kingdom slip from his hands in such a fashion. Why has he spent all this time crusading? He had better have managed his affairs at home. And, if he does side with these gorged beggars, what is that to us? Can't we make out as good a case before the Pope as they? We shall win, never fear! It only wants courage and skill, a little fencing with the cardinals, a counter-charge well pushed home. Besides we—" here the speaker drew himself up with conscious pride—"We are the University. Do you imagine Alexander will treat the University of Paris haughtily, or dare to settle so grave a question in the teeth of our rights and just demands?"

"Nay, I know not," replied the timid Nicholas. "I know not, in truth, how we shall fare. But I have

heard that an astrologer has predicted evil for our work ; and, indeed, I feel dubious myself as to its issue since the friars began to flock to the court of the Pope."

"Out upon you!" snapped the sceptical St Amour. "Do you give faith to such fools' jargon? If you are fearful of what those black-visaged hucksters prate, stay you behind and shrive you to a friar for a fool!"

"Nay, Maitre William! I meant no harm. But the odds are heavy."

"In our favour," was St Amour's comment. "The University against these intruding upstarts! Why, if the worst came to the worst, we could migrate again and leave Paris empty, in spite of Papal bulls and Royal decrees!"

"That were a thankless task," said Odo.

"Yes, but a masterful one. 'Twould bring this snivelling King and the friar-bitten Pope to reason."

"Softly, softly, Maitre William! Those are not the words to use in so delicate a cause as ours," urged Christian. "We must be discreet and cautious—humble, I should say, if need be—that we may gain our cause. For, no matter how, gain it we must!"

"Hearken to the clamour without!"

"That is the crowd acclaiming Maitre William's doctrines."

"How they shout and scream! I would that the Holy Father could hear his children of the University! No doubt of the decision then!"

"Pah!" said St Amour with a sneer. "The scholars are weathercocks, trimming their position to any breath of wind."

"Go out to them, Maitre William," urged Odo. "Show yourself to them."

"And what is the use?" asked St Amour. "Have they not just seen me in the chair?"

"Nevertheless it would be well. Tell them, if you can get a hearing for the acclamations, what the purpose of your mission is."

Whether St Amour approved or not of making public the sinuous diplomacy that lay hidden in his wily and shifty mind, the thought of receiving the homage of the crowd worked upon his vanity, and he fell in with the proposal, stipulating that the others should accompany him. He made safe the parchments and the two books, buttoning them all together in a strong leather wallet that hung underneath his outer cloak. Then, followed by the others, he made his way out into the little square that gave upon the church. It was densely packed with scholars of all conditions, with here and there an individual whose dress betokened that he had ceased to belong to the rank and file of the schools, and held position in the body regnant.

At the sight of St Amour and his three companions a shout went up, swelling and spreading from mouth to mouth as those farther away learnt the cause of the shouting, until the whole crowd was shrieking itself hoarse, with every accompanying sign of excited enthusiasm.

The news went round that St Amour was not alone—that the whole deputation to the Pope was present—that they were going to make speeches; and an improvised platform was hurriedly put together with planks and a couple of empty barrels rolled from a neighbouring wineshop. St Amour was pushed up, pale now, with brows drawn together in the sinister frown that he wore when in deep thought. Did he realise, this extraordinary, twisted genius, as he stood

gazing upon the upturned faces before him, to what extent he was responsible for the unloosed passions of these men?

Faces! A sea of faces! There were faces turned towards him in which every gradation of passion was written, from heavy brute sensualism and cunning to polished sneer and refined intellectual hatred and licence. They looked upwards, young men and old, men of all nations and climes, of all habits and manners of life, towards that pale, rough-hewed visage, towards those restless eyes that held them fixed in their hypnotic power. This was the man, the leader, who held them all together, diverse as they were in every other way, in this one point at least. He was the incarnation of the proud old secularism of Paris, the bitter and eternal opponent of the new influences that had begun to make themselves so strongly felt. Did he realise, as he looked down upon them, moistening his dry lips with his tongue as he prepared to address them, to what point his egoism, his libertine spirit, his fierce principles had led them? Did he understand how his bitter gibes had found their way into their hearts, his heated polemic stirred their minds, his inflammatory sermons and lectures goaded them into an opposition to the religious and their mortified lives? No. He had justified himself and his course of action long before. These were his sectaries. He and they were the University. He lifted his hand to command silence, and the mob straightway resolved itself into an orderly class of rapt listeners.

"Scholars of Paris," he began, in a loud and incisive, though somewhat high-pitched voice. "You have chosen us to fight your cause before the high tribunal of the Pope—you, members of the University and up-

holders of the immemorial rights and privileges of this august body. You have entrusted your cause to our pleading. All the events that have led up to this point you know and appreciate—how these mock religious have entered in among us like wolves, wearing a garb of humility, yet puffed up with a satanic pride, professing a poverty contrary to apostolic teaching and amassing money by extortion from rich and poor alike ; instead of living by the labours of their hands, holding no cure of souls, yet intruding themselves into the jurisdiction of the bishops and of the parochial clergy, yea ! and sitting as judges in the tribunal of penitence. What do they say, these false and upstart friars ? That poverty is an evangelic counsel ? And so it is, albeit they filch not their support from others, but labour, like St Paul, with their own hands. That they have received power from the Pope to hear confessions without cure of souls ? How can that be ? Was it not to the Apostles and their successors in the pastoral office that the power of binding and loosing was given ? These men are priests indeed, but they have no portion of the flock of Christ to rule ! ”

So he continued, adding sophism to sophism, tricking out his charges against the friars, with which all his hearers were now thoroughly familiar, in strong, nervous, telling words, carrying his audience with him.

“ And now they have wormed their way into the schools of Paris, and distract the peace with their novelties. They have stolen the professorial chairs from those who had a right to them and set themselves up, in their pride and ungodliness, against the University. They interfere with our privileges and break down our prescriptive customs. They carry their

squabbles to the courts of princes, enlist the favour of the King, poison the ear of the Pope. . . .

"We set out, your chosen representatives, seeking for justice. You have bidden us do all we can. We shall do that and more. Maitre John of Gecteville, Englishman, the Rector, Maitre John Belin, Frenchman, are your deputies. They will see that your case is properly pleaded. As for me"—and he looked down with a proud humility—"I shall defend my libel and make it good. Moreover, I shall see that these friars are implicated, entangled, compromised, with the heresies of their John of Parma, their Leonard and their Gerard of San Donnino."—These were the friars who, by preaching the wild doctrines of Abbot Joachim, had certainly given a handle to the opponents of the Franciscans.

A wild burst of cheering rent the air, as St Amour finished his harangue. One after another of his colleagues pledged himself to similar, though possibly less strongly worded, sentiments, to the enthusiastic plaudits of the scholars; and, the four doctors having withdrawn to prepare for their immediate departure, the crowd began to break up and disperse, talking loudly and excitedly of the certain and assured success of the University mission to Rome.

Arnoul, who, with Roger, had been attracted by the noise of shouting and cheering when St Amour first appeared, had listened to the whole tirade against his friends the friars. He moved off with the rest when the crowd broke up, his whole being in revolt against the insinuations and slanders of St Amour. They were too specious, too cleverly put forward, for him to see where they were wrong, but wrong they must certainly be, he thought.

"Well, Master Arnoul, what do you think of that?" asked Roger, breaking in upon his silence.

"Think?" he exclaimed. "Why, that that man would perjure his soul to do the religious an injury. Of all the clever scoundrels! Oh, the conceit, the pride, the hatred! And that was the man I purposed taking as my leader! Those were the principles I had adopted! Faugh! I am sick of it all! Sick and tired of everything, Roger! The world is full of lies and hatred and murder."

"Don't say that, lad. Don't lose your grip of things. But did you see the man's eyes as he spoke?"

"Why, no, Roger. What of his eyes?"

"Do you remember, lad, the otters down by Avon Mouth? He has the eyes of an otter. Sleek and smooth is the otter with its great, open eyes. But there is deceit and cruelty in them. They are crafty and shifty eyes. Yes, lad," Roger summed up St Amour in his homely way, "he is an otter, and the friars are the fish. He will get at them if he can and take them out on the bank to eat their heads off and let them rot. I don't trust him. I have no learning like you, but I know enough to read a knave from his face."

"You are right, Roger. He is crafty and slippery. But wait! Brother Thomas is pitted against him now, and the Lord Pope will give the friars a fair hearing."

"I don't love the friars myself," Roger pursued meditatively; "but I like men of that kidney less. He will stop at nothing. Let us trust you are right, lad, and that they will win their cause."

So the deputation from the University set out in haste and made its way hurriedly to the Papal Court, to which arena the battle had been shifted. And Paris settled down in a fashion to its work once more, to its

petty scheming and plotting, anxious, restless, anticipant, a seething, bubbling cauldron of elemental life and passion, kept from boiling over altogether by the fact that, for the moment, the fuel of its main interests had been moved from it. The secular doctors had gone with their dispute to Anagni.

CHAPTER XXV

SIBILLA COMES TO PARIS

“**L**OOK! Master Arnoul, look! There, by the rood, is the Lady Sibilla! See, she has turned! She is coming this way! Who would have believed it? Who would have thought it? In Paris! By the saints!”

“What, Roger? What is it you are saying? The Lady Sibilla? You dream!”

“Nay, master, I am not dreaming. Look over there, by the head of the bridge. On my life! It is the Lady Sibilla Vipont of Moreleigh! See! Don’t you see her—beside the dame with the scarlet hood?”

At the man’s words Arnoul turned suddenly as white as a sheet. His eyes had been fixed idly upon a party of people—a grand dame of the period and her retinue—slowly riding past. He had been wondering who rode in such state, for the trappings of the horses and the rich dresses of the riders were evidence of their high rank. The young man was too much occupied in staring at the silken housings and gilt accoutrements, trying to discover the blazons of the house, to have perceived the faces of the riders; and Roger’s words came to him as a stunning blow. He started forward towards the spot where, close by the Pont au Change, the riders had paused to view the varied scene. An elderly lady—she of the scarlet hood—was pointing out the shops of the jewellers on the bridge to the two

young girls beside her. Two men-servants rode behind the women. Evidently none of them were inhabitants of Paris. They were occupied in looking about them with animation and interest, as only strangers would. And their faces were fresh and rosy, not sallow like most of the faces to be seen in the City.

It was, true enough, Sibilla whom Roger had seen—Sibilla in all the radiance of her grace and beauty. She turned suddenly and, catching sight of Arnoul, opened her eyes in wonder—then, with a little start and blush, she withdrew her gaze as suddenly and began to speak earnestly to her companion. The ladies rode slowly forward in the stream of people crossing and recrossing the bridge. They were making, apparently, for the City. Arnoul, following at a short distance, noticed that Sibilla lingered a little behind the others, and seemed vastly interested in the trinkets of the goldsmiths temptingly spread out before her eyes. He noticed, too, that from time to time she cast a quick glance behind her. The others were a little distance away now, looking at a wonderful display of the jeweller's art in a shop farther on. He edged up quietly beside her. "Lady Sibilla! Lady Sibilla!" he called to her softly. "Have you forgotten me? Arnoul—Arnoul the Englishman?" In his excitement he forgot that he was not speaking to one of the students.

"Forgotten you? No, Arnoul de Valletort. I have not forgotten." She spoke in a low voice, almost in a whisper, reining in her steed and keeping her eyes averted from his face. "But I must not speak with you here and now," she went on. "The Countess, with whom I journey. . . . I am in her care. . . . Though we have been in Paris these five days, I had never thought . . . had never dreamed of meeting you. Indeed—" her voice

trembled—"I had not even hoped to see you. How were you to know? Where was I to find you?" She spoke hurriedly, nervously.

"Countess? Not speak with me? All those days here?" gasped Arnoul. "But I must have word with you! Countess or no Countess, you must speak with me! Can you not see how necessary . . . ?"

He spoke rapidly and with suppressed emotion, so that the girl looked down at his upturned face wonderingly. There she saw the change that his University life and the terrible grief he had so lately suffered had written. He was the same—only older and more resolute-looking. Handsomer, too, she thought, and more manly, with the down upon his upper lip. But his manner, so strange and so insistent, she could not understand—though she did not try to resist it.

"We are in Paris to see the sights," she said. "We are going now to Notre Dame. I cannot speak to you here. Follow us to the church, and I shall slip away, if I can manage it, for a moment from the others and speak to you there. But cautiously, I beseech you! I would not have my companions know of it. Believe me, there are reasons—grave reasons. . . ."

The girl left him hurriedly, touching her horse with her heel as though she were a man and wore spurs, and dexterously guiding the animal through the throng that threatened to separate her altogether from her companions, rejoined the others. Arnoul followed them to the Cathedral, in front of which they dismounted, leaving their horses in the care of the two men.

Once inside, an easy opportunity was found for their meeting. The dim light of the church, the many piers and chapels, the corners and angles of the building, gave cover and secrecy. The three ladies walked about,

looking at the many things of interest in the great church, Arnoul shadowing them at a distance. At last Sibilla managed to remain alone in one of the side chapels, while the other two went on, not noticing her absence. Arnoul was at her side in an instant and speaking in low, hurried tones.

"Why are you here?" was the first question that he uttered. He could not understand how she should be in Paris—sight-seeing and enjoying herself—with her father a murderer—his brother's murderer—and even then an exile suing for pardon at the court of Rome. It was too callous, too heartless!

"Why am I here? What a question to ask! I am come with my lady, because she asked me to come, and because my father wished me to voyage abroad for a season."

The girl was unfeignedly astonished at the lad's words and still more perplexed by the extraordinary agitation of his manner.

"But . . . ? But Sir Sigar . . . ? How could he have allowed you to come?" Arnoul stammered. "How is it possible?"

"What do you mean? I do not. . . . I cannot understand." The girl spoke blankly, looking him full in the eyes with wondering gaze.

"My God! Is it possible?" thought the boy. And then, suddenly: "How long is it since you left England?"

Sibilla was frankly puzzled. "We have been journeying now for months past. We have come through Normandy, and stayed at many towns on the way. It was in the early spring that we sailed from Devon."

"Then you do not know . . . ?"

"Know what?"

"Oh, heaven! How can I tell her?" gasped the boy.

"What . . . what is it that so distresses you? I cannot read the meaning of your words."

"Your father . . . Your father . . ."

"What do you say? My father? What is amiss with my father?" The girl grew pale and agitated in her turn.

"My brother. . . . Oh, how can I say it? My brother. . . . Guy is dead. And your father . . . your father . . ."

The Lady Sibilla blanched and trembled, leaning against a pillar for support. What was coming? She was like to faint.

"Your father is not in Devon now. He is gone to Rome."

"To Rome? And why?" Her words came frightened and trembling.

"For relief from censure. He has. . . . He has slain. . . ."

"Oh, God of heaven, what are you saying?" the girl half shrieked. "What do you mean? What. . . . What has he done?"

It was pitiful, terrible to say it; nevertheless, having thus referred to the tragedy, thinking that she knew of it, he was obliged to tell her all. Now he was able to understand her presence in Paris and her demeanour. She had set out before the murder. She knew nothing of it.

He recounted all that had happened at Moreleigh—his brother's death, her father's remorse and pilgrimage in search of absolution, his own agony. And as he recounted the sad tale, while she stood there white and open-eyed and trembling, the old fires of his first love

for her burst into flame again. Terrible as his tale was for him to tell, awful as it was for her to hear, as he told it he found his heart going out to her as it had never gone out to anyone in his life before. Through the sad words, the broken, ragged sentences, in which he spoke of her father's awful deed, the burden of his great love breathed. Sibilla was no longer a far-off ideal—an ideal set up in the sanctuary of his own heart and soul to be worshipped as a thing high above him—but a living, breathing creature to be loved; a creature standing before him, stricken with a grief that was his own, dumb with a suffering that lent words to his faltering tongue, quivering with a new-born agony that set pulses of pity and love throbbing in his heart. He stood in her presence, whispering of her father's crime, but all the time he was drinking in her beauty and losing himself in it. What was his folly, and worse than folly, in for but one instant stooping to the baseness of his wild, unbridled course! He had never loved before—no, never! This was love, true love, at last! Whatever else had been was madness! He lost himself in the impetuosity of his passion. Speaking of her father, he pleaded for himself. His words came fast, burning, a torrent of fire, a desert blast of hot, passionate entreaty. All the things that stood between him and the winning of her he spoke of. He was carried away in the excess of his worship. His poverty, his state, the murder, the months of wasted energy—he spared himself and her in nothing. It was a strange speech, the overwhelming outpouring of a pent-up soul. But it was an earnest one. And she, the awful tidings so unexpectedly brought to her burning into her brain, knowing not whither to turn for comfort or consolation, turned to him. They were companions in grief; they

would be companions in consolation. Her dreams of her hero-knight made her look to him for strength even now when it was his hand that was wounding her. She lifted her eyes to his, and the love-light—the faith and trust of utter love—shone for a moment through the distress and agony of her pain. She tried to speak, but her parched lips refused their office. She put out her hand, as though to stay herself, and then shrank back against the pillar, trembling.

But Arnoul had seen and read the faithful message of her soul, and the vehemence of his love broke out afresh.

Sibilla listened, agitated and affrighted by the very violence of his pleading. She remembered—as one in a dream, it all passed before her—the scene with her father at Moreleigh when she had dared to confess her love. She saw him now—bowed down with repentance and remorse—craving pardon and absolution as a penitent at Rome. She loved Arnoul—the more that she now saw him in the flesh, who had been ever in her secret thoughts. The heart-springs of her sympathy vibrated to his voice in its sad re-telling of her father's awful deed, in spite of herself, and she yearned towards him for the love that he offered, longing, craving, yet resisting. For she was a Vipont. Love as she might, she could not forget that. Her father's scathing words had told. She was torn between conflicting passions—her love for Arnoul dragging her to throw herself into his outstretched arms, and the stubborn pride of race that threw her back upon herself in lonely coldness and disdain. What she had just learnt, too, had made it the harder for her to unbend. Her father was a murderer. He had killed Sir Guy, Arnoul's only brother. How could she stoop—and to one whom her

own father had so grievously, so cruelly, wronged—and declare the love that so tortured her own heart? She leant against the pillar, dry-eyed, speechless, hopeless. The words were frozen on her lips, her heart wrung and bleeding. How she loved this Valletort! And yet . . . and yet . . . she could not . . . she might not show her love. And her father . . . her own father! God, how terrible it was!

Arnoul's burning words struck upon her ears. His eyes seemed to penetrate her very soul. She began to waver.

In his passion—his ecstasy—the lad seized her hand and clasped it passionately to his breast. She yielded. Her love proved stronger than her pride, stronger than the sudden revulsion and disdain, stronger even than her newly learnt anguish. Yet there was a struggle. It could not thus be all abandonment.

"My father," she sighed; and her words came in the faintest of whispers. "My father—he would never. . . . Oh, Blessed Virgin! he would . . . he would. . . ."

But Arnoul had lost himself. What recked he of fathers? Who should stand between him and the being that he claimed by right of perfect love? Even the thought of poor Guy was powerless to stay him now. He clasped her hand the closer in his own and pressed nearer, ever nearer, to her. His ardent words burned into her very soul. His warm breath came and went upon her cheek. He felt the quick beating of her heart upon his breast. His lips met hers.

"As there is a God in heaven," he protested; "as I hope for salvation, nothing shall ever break my faith or daunt my love! I shall strive! I shall live but for thee!"

She heard him and sighed again. An eternity was

compressed into an instant of time. Then she tore herself away from his embrace.

"What have I done?" she cried. "What have I done?"

"Done?" he made answer. "You have opened paradise to a tortured soul. You have given hope to one who was in despair. Now—now, will you say me nay if I seek your Countess?"

"For the love of heaven, begone! She comes! See! Already they have discovered . . . ! They have missed me and are returning! Fly! I may not . . . ! Oh, I may not . . . !"

"Sibilla, as you love me. . . . As my love for you is all in all. . . . I beseech you do not leave me thus! Why, why, in heaven's name . . . ?"

"I may not stay! I pray you! Oh, I pray you, let me go!"

"But where? When do you depart? I shall see you again . . . ? You will not—you cannot leave me thus!"

"To-morrow! To-morrow we depart from Paris. I shall go," she continued bitterly, "to my aunt—to Exeter. There is yet the convent if the castle lacks its lord! Where else is there for me now to harbour? And . . . But soft, for the love of heaven! Here is the——"

"Sibilla! Lady Sibilla!" came a querulous voice from beyond the chapel. "Where are you? Where can you have hid yourself? We are seeking for you!"

She tore herself from him. There was one embrace—she yielding to his passionate ardour—and he found himself standing in the chapel alone. She had gone—whither he knew not.

But he had seen her. He had heard her voice. He had spoken with her. It was enough to set his pulses

throbbing and his brain reeling! His lips had met those of the Lady Sibilla—Sibilla, his own beloved Sibilla! She had heard his words of love! She had hearkened and sighed! He walked on air, on clouds, on nothingness!

And Thomas—Brother Thomas—it flashed across his mind—had counselled him aright. Sibilla would be his! He had only to wait, only to win her! Nothing could ever come between them now! He had spoken with her! She had hearkened to him! The touch of her hand . . . the unresisting caress of her lips . . .! What more was there to hope? What bliss could there be greater?

He found himself, in a maze and whirl of thought, outside the Cathedral, walking with Roger, in a dream.

"It was, as I said, the Lady Sibilla, was it not?" the good man was asking him.

"It was indeed the Lady Sibilla Vipont of Moreleigh," he found himself repeating mechanically.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE POPE AWAITS THOMAS AQUINAS

MASSIVE and sombre, in the beams of the setting sun, the town of Anagni rose upon its mountain top. The sharp indentations and jutting curves of the mountains that soared away from it rank upon rank, caught the last glow of the yellow light, burying it in the folds of purple shadow. A little band of travellers was passing slowly up the slope of the hill that fell away from the principal gate of the town. Behind them, across the fertile valley still rich in the harvest hues of late summer, stood out in low profile upon their mountain tops, Segni in its grey girdle of pelassic walls, Carpineto straggling on its hillside. Far away to the left of the valley Alatri rose, a brown and purple shadow upon a dark blue hill.

Above the yellow corn and the green vines of the valley, above the gnarled olive stems and the luxuriant chestnut groves upon the slopes, the towns upon their hills, looking silently upon each other across the intervening spaces, proud, feudal, distrustful, the isolated strongholds of a spirit and a system that had reached its apogee.

Our band of wayfarers was composed of friars—friars spent and worn with journeying. They had made their way without pause or lengthy rest from Paris to Anagni, where Alexander held his Papal Court. And the handful of weary brethren, slowly toiling up the long hill that led to the gate of the town, though it could hardly

be supposed that they were aware of the greatness of the issue, was the first wave of that vast force, that unstemmable tide, that would ultimately crush feudalism out of the world and leave it ready for the new system of civilised Europe.

"It is late, my Brother," said one of the friars to another, as they urged their mounts towards the goal. "Late, and ere we reach the sheltering walls of our convent, night will have fallen. I am weary of this hasty journeying, Brother. There is no comfort in a voyage such as this."

His companion turned slowly towards him. His large eyes gleamed strangely in the dying light. "Weary, Brother?" he said. "Our pilgrimage is not yet done. Threescore years and ten, and if by chance. . . . But we draw nigh to the gate. Be sure, Brother, our brethren will be awaiting us, and the General. . . ."

"A fool's errand!" grumbled the first speaker. "Of a certainty, a fool's errand! Is not our Lord the Pope in our favour? Is not Master Albert, our Brother, here? What need drag you from your work in the University, through all these perils, weariness by sea and land, hardships and discomforts, as the Apostle says, to come here to Italy?"

"Peace, my brother! 'Tis his Holiness who commands!"

"Yes, I know! His Holiness! Are there not enough in his court to tell him the truth? Yet he must drag you from your school into this foreign land. I know! Oh yes, I know! The best the order has to defend it! An angel from heaven, forsooth! So Brother Thomas must needs come post haste from Paris with a defence for practising the Gospel counsels! Brother Thomas,

no less, the pride and glory of all our order! And to defend us against these God-accursed seculars. . . .”

“Peace, brother!” The words fell solemnly from the slow lips of Brother Thomas. “Who am I that I should come to the succour of our order—ay, and of all the friars—in their hour of need? Who am I? Tinkling brass—a shaken reed! ‘Except the Lord build the house. . . .’ ‘Unless the Lord keep the city. . . .’ Nay, Brother, spare these words and be at your prayers! The danger that menaces us is no vain sophism of St Amour’s. ‘The kings of the earth stand up and their rulers take counsel together. . . .’ Our Lord the Pope has given to us friars, humble and lowly though we be, the power to absolve and to preach throughout the world. Of a surety, these privileges trench deep upon the rights of a body corporate. Yet, were it not for us and for our humble work for souls, I mistrust me that the work of God would be accomplished upon earth.”

“The seculars are accursed hirelings,” put in the brother roughly. “They are wolves in sheep’s clothing, taking tithes of mint and cummin, defrauding the widow and the orphan. Upon my soul and the faith——”

“Nay, Brother, speak not thus, I pray you! There are abuses doubtless—but it is not for us to set them right. For us to labour for the salvation of the souls of men. For us to practise those same Gospel precepts. We ask no more. To follow in the path of Him whose name is in our hearts and on our lips. To work for Him. To labour for Him. If need be, to die for Him—no more. Yea, my Brother, these words, this antipathy to the seculars, is not seemly in the heart of a true religious; for the seculars are the servants of God no less than we. We are no more than poor brethren, seeking to live

unmolested and to do our work in peace. All will yet be well.

"But see! Yonder is the gate, and we are at our journey's end ere yet the sun is gone from the sky!"

While the travellers were ascending the hill and drawing nearer to the town, a solitary man was waiting seated in a huge and sombre room of the great, frowning palace near the Cathedral. He was a man past middle age. The scanty light that struggled through the narrow windows, pierced in the thickness of almost cyclopean walls, just showed the ascetic features, the dark, curling hair and beard cut after the manner of the ecclesiastic, the large and intelligent eyes, the broad, high forehead. His expression was a singularly kindly one, though traces of stubbornness as well as of conscious power were also to be found in it. The delicate arch of the nostril, the thin and somewhat closely pressed lips that showed beneath the drooping moustache, betrayed the enthusiast and the mystic. He was seated in a rich chair, carved and gilt and upholstered in crimson silk. Before him stood a table, also carved and gilt, supporting two candlesticks bearing waxen tapers that had just been lighted. Between the candles was a crucifix, and before it lay writing materials—pens, inkhorn, sand—together with a large and richly illuminated volume, upon the opened page of which the ecclesiastic's hand was lying. But he was not reading. The large and dreamy eyes were turned towards the white figure of the tortured Christ hanging upon the cross.

The rest of the furniture of the immense room was as scanty as the struggling light itself, though what there was of it was rich in the extreme. Here and there some

object stood out from the general gloom, in patches of crimson or gold, or glistening white or coloured marbles. At each end was a doorway leading into an adjoining apartment and closed with heavy folds of tapestry. The room was the audience chamber of the Palace of Anagni; the ecclesiastic, Alexander, fourth of that name, Bishop of Rome.

The Pope sat, gazing upon the crucifix. There he had been sitting ever since the consistory, the third that had been held that week. And indeed there was enough to occupy his thought. The political outlook was a dreary one. His offer of the throne of Sicily to Edmund had been accepted. His legates had for months been waging war in the young King's name. But King Henry found it difficult—nay, impossible—to furnish the means necessary to pay the Papal armies that fought for his son's new possessions. England was groaning under his fruitless efforts to obtain money. And at length Manfred, with his Saracen troops, had conquered both Naples and Sicily.

The Pope's own University, too, that turbulent School of Paris, was giving trouble again. Bull after bull, brief after brief, had he sent into France to quell the disorder, notwithstanding which it grew and fermented, threatening to end in a final disruption of the place of learning. It seemed to be slipping from the grasp of the Papal hands altogether, so unruly and so precipitate were the turbulent minds that strove to shape its course. And even the friars, whom he had done his best to support in their persecution and troubles, had seemed to give way before the great moral pressure of the secular body. They had actually written supplicating him to withdraw the bulls that he had addressed in their favour. They had attempted

a compromise with the University authorities, without his supreme sanction. And now dogmatic controversy had become mixed up with the conflicting policies; and King Louis had brought the whole crisis to a head by sending St Amour's book directly to the fount of all earthly authority. His cardinals were occupied with its statements. They had spoken of it at the consistory. And deputations were on their way to examine and refute—to drag out the weary controversy in the very presence of the Holy Father.

There were other matters, too, lesser troubles and cases coming daily before him from the whole world for settlement. The curia was burdened with the cares of civilisation. And the sinews of war! Where was money to be got? Agents in England, agents in France, agents and legates everywhere, gathering, scraping, screwing, in his name. Much of the money stuck in its passage through their hands. Besides, the nations had been bled so long that there was little to be had. Perhaps there was a touch of avarice in the character of Alexander IV.; but money must be had for the curia, and it was the business of the agents and legates to obtain it. How could he know the intolerable strain that perpetual taxation put upon the people—taxed as they were by kings as well as by popes? That money was refused often enough, he knew, refused by bishops and wealthy abbots, who certainly ought to bear their part in the burdens of Church-administration as well as the wealthy laymen, and set them a good example to boot. There was little money, at any rate, in the Papal treasury; and the vast machinery of the Roman Court, that existed for the good and well-being of the Church at large, must be oiled in order to proceed as it should with the business of the peoples.

Amid his many cares the Pope found time to draw some spiritual comfort and consolation from his religion. That is why, perhaps, he was now gazing upon the crucifix; for it was not all politics, and money-getting legates, and squabbles at home or abroad that occupied his attention. Nevertheless, he came back from his meditation with a sigh, confronted once more with the practical business of his office. He closed the vellum volume before him, rose slowly to his feet, and crossed the length of the great room. For a moment he stood at the doorway and then, lifting the heavy curtains, passed on into the ante-chamber. Two clerks—ecclesiastics of some grade and dignity, for they wore the purple garb of prelates—were busily engaged in writing at two small tables in the apartment. The Pope stood, a ghostlike figure in white, beyond the circles of light that radiated from their candles. Neither of the scribes had noticed his approach, but they both looked up quickly and rose to their feet as they heard his low and musical voice.

"Are the drafts of the briefs made out, Hugo?" he asked. "We wish to read them Ourselves as soon as they are completed, and before they are written out fair."

"They are not yet complete, Holiness," the cleric addressed as Hugo made answer. "I am still at work upon them. I shall bring them to your Holiness at once when they are done."

The other cleric bent again to his task of copying. He was engaged upon a brief confirming and extending the privileges of the University of Salamanca. An elderly man, this, with his back bent by much writing, grey wisps of hair standing out behind his ears. The mellow candlelight, reflected up from the vellum lying

before him, softened somewhat the hard lines of his face; not so much, though, that it ceased to be crabbed and even cruel, with a shifting, crafty look about the downcast eyes.

Hugo, on the contrary, was a young man, straight as a die, and of a pleasant, though grave, countenance; one of those individuals who take life seriously enough, and for what it is worth, yet somehow always seem to find it easy to look upon the bright side of things and to make an estimate accordingly. Both, for all the difference in their appearance and character, were devoted servants, half officials, half secretaries, of the Pope, each serving to the utmost of his power in his own way.

"'Tis well," replied the Pope. "And the arrangements have been made for the solemn condemnation of the infamous libel against the mendicants?"

"Yes, Holiness. The cardinals have sent in a copy of their report upon it, and all is ready for the judgment."

"Good," said the Pope, emphasising his words with little nods of his head. "Good, Hugo. We shall make an example now, once and for all, of these detractors and calumniators. Our University of Paris is distracted and distressed as it has not been since the time of Abelard. Our brethren, who look to Us for succour, are set upon and driven from the schools. Nor shall they cry to Us in vain! By St Claire, whose sanctity We were privileged to honour, by the stigmata of St Francis, by Our own faith, We shall right them! We shall reduce these howling dogs to order! Has my Lord the Cardinal departed?"

"Which cardinal, Holiness?"

"St Caro."

"Yes, Holiness. He went straight from the consistory to his convent."

"And is Brother Thomas of Aquin yet arrived?"

"There is no word, Holiness; though he should have been here before now."

"You have acquainted Brother Humbert that We wish him to defend the orders—and especially the poverty of the orders—before Us?"

"Yes, Holiness."

"Good!"

The Pope turned as if about to depart. His white form looked ghostly in the flickering light of the tapers. Hugo made as though to address him, paused in hesitation, and then, with a deprecatory cough, said: "Holiness!"

"Yes, Hugo?" queried the Pope, turning again.

"The Cardinal Penitentiary has left a referendum in the murder case."

"Murder! What murder?" asked Pope Alexander, starting back.

"The murder of the English priest, de Valletort, Holiness. He—the Penitentiary—has given as a penance the building of a church and the endowing of a perpetual mass. But it seems that the murderer—he is one Vipont, an Englishman and noble—is not satisfied. He craves an audience with your Holiness. He is very penitent—an old man and quite broken. . . ."

"We cannot see him," the Pope broke in upon his secretary. "You did not say you could arrange an audience, Hugo? You did not tell him We would see him?" And then, without waiting to hear Hugo's low "No, Holiness, I told him it was impossible," he went on querulously. "We are torn hither and thither by affairs of state. We have heresies thrust upon Us,

heresies hatched in Our own schools of Paris. Our armies that wage war for the English are starving for want of English gold—gold that was promised and that has never come. We have the cares of all the churches pressing heavy upon Us . . . the cares of all the churches. Truly We are the servant of the servants of God. Ay! A slave, a very servant of slaves! And yet. . . . And yet, We are the Father of Christendom, torn though it is by these endless wars. We are the Father of souls entrusted to Our keeping, that look to Us for consolation and for strength. Hugo! Hugo! 'Tis far better to be the Cardinal of St Eustachio—a cardinal deacon, Hugo, one of the least—better to be a simple canon of Segni, or a boy, free from care, in the little town of Jenne, than to be weighed to the earth with the tiara of the Popes and the weight of the keys of Peter! We are a father, Hugo; a father to whom the children have a right to come—most of all, the child that comes back from his wrongdoing. We will see this Vipont, Hugo! Bid him come to Us as to a father. And, Hugo, pray . . . pray for Orlando of the Counts of Segni, that his strength fail not in all his perplexities, for Alexander is the Vicar of the Lord, and bears the cares, the responsibilities, of all the world upon his shoulders.”

The Pope was deeply moved. His voice trembled as he spoke, at the thought of the awful meaning of his high office. Then, once again, he turned to go.

“There is nothing else?” he asked, steadying his voice.

At the moment, and before Hugo had time to answer, there was a clanking of armour in the room beyond that in which they stood. A curtain moved at the far end, showing the lines of guards that stood without,

guarding the approaches to the papal apartments. A small, thick-set figure entered, and the curtain fell again, to the accompaniment of a second clanking of steel.

The new-comer was clad in white, with a mantle and hood of black almost entirely covering his habit. A small cap of vivid scarlet covered his thin, white hairs.

At first he did not see the Pope in the sparse light of the room. Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he hastened forward and, bending low, kissed the outstretched hand.

"Holy Father!" he puffed, for he had come in great haste.

"My Lord Cardinal?" queried the Pope kindly.

"Holiness, Brother Thomas of Aquin is come and is even now at the convent of the friars."

The Pope smiled—a rare, sweet smile—and took the cardinal by the arm.

"Come!" he said, still smiling. "Hugo, you will set apart an hour for us to see this Vipont. Come, my Lord Cardinal!"

And they passed through the tapestried door to the audience chamber.

Hugo seated himself again at the table, and drew the parchments towards him. He smiled, too, as he jotted down Vipont's name.

Then there was silence, save for the scratching of the quills as the two secretaries worked on in the flickering candlelight.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE INTERVIEW

THE hot midday sun of early autumn beat down upon the valley. The vines, the blue-grey olives, the golden corn stood out in patches of bright colour in the heat haze that shimmered upwards towards the cloudless sky. On their hills the lonely towns sat trembling, swaying, shifting, in the glare. As the eye rested upon their solid fortifications and soaring buildings, they seemed to dissolve and form again, like fairy cities built of the air spirals and the sunbeams. But within the Palace of Anagni all was cool and restful. The fierce heat could not pierce the thickness of its great walls; and though to an observer on a distant hill-top it would have looked as unreal and as fairylike as the rest of the strange panorama, as it reflected the heat waves from its baked stone front in dancing shimmer, the hand laid upon these same stone walls within would have felt nothing but a grateful coolness. The garish light, too, that entered through the narrow windows, was subdued and diffused in the great room where Hugo and his companion worked.

This morning they were not alone in the apartment. A considerable number of people, both ecclesiastics and lay, were waiting for audience with the Holy Father. From time to time the curtain moved, and someone left the audience chamber. Then Hugo, glancing at the lists he held in his hand, went quietly to one or other of the groups, whereupon the heavy curtain was raised

again, and a new audience began. There was a continual clank of armour to be heard, for without, soldiers were slowly pacing to and fro, and in the room itself gorgeously accoutred officers stood on guard near the farther door. In the corner nearest to the entrance one melancholy-looking man stood apart from the others. He was clad in a dress of dark and sombre hue, unrelieved by ornament of any kind. He was a tall man with a firm-knit, well-proportioned figure ; but his head was so bowed, and his arms fell away so loosely from his shoulders, that he appeared, if anything, under rather than over the average height. His hair was iron-grey, bleaching to white about the temples, and his eyes, when he looked up, as he did quickly from time to time, were apparently the only living features in his face. They burned like coals under the cavernous brows, showing strangely in the drawn, white face. But for those fierce eyes and the sudden movements of his bowed head, it might have been a corpse that awaited an audience with the Holy Father.

A stir at the entrance. The curtain moved to admit a party of religious, the brown habit of the Friar Minor with its pointed hood, side by side with the white tunic and black cloak of the Dominican. Hugo came forward quickly to receive them, and they stood together, speaking in low tones, waiting for the swing of the curtain to show that the Pope was once more disengaged.

But as it moved there was another stir at the farther door. The hangings were twitched sharply back and two guards entered, standing at the salute, one at each side, as a cardinal passed between them. He made direct for Hugo and his group of religious, crossing the room with firm and businesslike steps. The secretary

bowed to kiss his ring as the Cardinal asked hurriedly, "Am I late, Hugo? I trust the friars have not yet had audience with the Holy Father?"

"They have just come, Eminence. These are they." The secretary moved aside as he spoke, so that the Cardinal stood facing the brothers.

"His Holiness bade me admit you to his presence at once," continued Hugo. "Even now he awaits you."

"So!" said the Cardinal. "Let us advance, my brethren. A sad occasion, a sad cause, that brings us together at the feet of the Pope; but courage, brothers! The commission has already condemned your accusers, and the Holy Father will ratify what we have done."

They passed through into the presence. The Pope was seated by the table bearing the crucifix. Several prelates and an officer of his guard stood not far from his person, and armed soldiers were posted at either door. The Holy Father's head was resting wearily upon his hand; but, as he caught sight of the friars and the Cardinal he sat erect and alert to welcome them. There was no trace of weariness or preoccupation in his gesture, as he received their homage, naming each—the Cardinal Hugh of St Caro, Brother Humbert, General of the Dominican Order, and Bonaventure, Head of the Franciscans, with kind words of paternal welcome. Brother Thomas hung back behind the others in an attitude of supreme reverence and humility; but Alexander, catching sight of him, beckoned to him to come forward.

"And you, my brother," he began, with a kindly smile, as Brother Thomas fell upon his knees at his feet, "you are Brother Thomas of Aquin. It needs not that my Lord Cardinal should make you known to Us. Rise, my brother, rise! Yes; he is not likely to

allow Us to forget. He never tires of telling us of your renunciation, and of how you escaped the wiles of those warlike brothers of yours. He was himself present when you defended your vocation before Our holy predecessor Innocent. He has recounted to Us the scene when, in the presence of the countess, your mother, you gained the Holy Father to your cause. Was it not he who urged your call to Paris? he, too, who whispered in Our ear the counsel that has led Us to summon you to Our court in this crisis of your order? Yes, my son! We know you well by good report. It is Our will that you, my brother, should publicly defend your manner of life before Us in the Cathedral Church of this town. You know the issue! You have perused the libel of St Amour?"

"Your Holiness!" It was Brother Humbert who spoke for the young Dominican. "Your Holiness, three days ago I placed a transcript of the work in the hands of Brother Thomas. He has his reply ready by now."

"And had you not seen it before?" asked the Pope, turning directly to Aquinas. "Had you not read the book in Paris? Did you not know the substance of these attacks against your order? Have you not heard this turbulent, this crafty St Amour or his associates in the schools?"

"No, Holy Father," came the answer in the clear, slow voice of Brother Thomas. "Only in a general way have I taken any part, and then no active part, in this matter."

The Pope made a gesture of impatience. "Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Surely you cannot have been deaf to the calumnies that have been spread abroad? Surely your cloister echoed with the accusations of the seculars?"

"Holy Father," replied Brother Thomas in the same slow voice. "It was not for me to listen to the calumnies, or to take action against the accusations. I had my schools, my work, my rule——"

"But your blood must have boiled when you saw all you heard most dear held up to ridicule! It would not be human to take no interest in the fate, the destiny of your brethren. Surely you have read the libel?"

"Yes, Holy Father," the brother answered, with submission. "Three days ago my brother Humbert"—and he bowed his head in reverence as he spoke of his superior—"gave the libel into my hands. I have read it. I have mastered its contents. I have an answer, with God's help, to the charges."

"And not before?" queried the Pope, more surprised than ever. "Impossible! Our commission has had the volume under consideration these three months, and only now has come to a conclusion as to its contents. You have had it only three days in your possession and profess to have found an answer to the accusations!"

The Cardinal was smiling discreetly. He knew what he was about when he suggested that Brother Thomas should be sent for.

"Holiness," he interrupted, with a little gesture of self-congratulation, "Brother Thomas is a friar. It behoves him to do what work his superiors assign to him. He has kept aloof from these wordy battles, these endless disputes, because he was engaged in the work of teaching, and because they are of no profit to the soul. He looked, doubtless, trusted to his superiors, as he was only a simple friar, to defend the order under their care from all assaults. Now that your Holiness

has called him from his cell and from his class-room, you will not find him dumb. He will force these calumnies back upon those who utter them. He will twist and break their arguments. He will utterly confute them."

"Yes," mused the Pontiff, half to himself. "Yes, We have called him to the defence of the religious. We have heard of his keen mind, his ready logic. But dare We risk so weighty a matter? He is yet young. Scarce can he, in these three days, have perused the libel. Better, my Lord Cardinal—far better postpone the public dispute until our Brother Thomas has had time to order and arrange his answer."

"There is no need, Holiness," the Cardinal explained. "He is ready, is he not, my brother Humbert?"

The General made a gesture of assent. "If the dispute is to be held," he said, "'twere best held at once. I will answer for the Brother Thomas of Aquin."

During this conversation, its subject, Brother Thomas, stood with downcast eyes before the Pope. There was no false modesty, no proud humility, in his attitude. He had answered the Pope truthfully, and had heard the doubts of his Holiness and the warm praise of the Cardinal with equal indifference. He was, so he felt, an instrument in the hand of destiny. Praise could not alter the even temper of his calm mind, any more than calumny could shake his confidence in the designs of Providence with regard to the religious life. Utterly lacking in self-consciousness, he stood there, a humble friar, ready to speak if he were bidden to speak, to keep silence if his defence were not required. Pope Alexander looked at him keenly from time to time, as he and the Cardinal spoke together. He perceived for himself that

there was no mock humility in the attitude of Brother Thomas and gradually became conscious of that extraordinary output of strength that seemed to radiate from his person. This, more than persuasion or argument, had its influence in deciding him.

"Good, my Lord Cardinal! Be it as you say. Two days from now, in the Cathedral Church, Our Brother Thomas shall defend his order and its rule. We shall give orders that the whole curia be present; and after his defence We will that the findings of Our commission be read, and sentence pronounced in due form."

After a few moments spent in further conversation, the Cardinal gave the signal to withdraw, and they knelt for the papal benediction. Then the guards opened the heavy door and drew back the tapestries, as they passed out from the audience chamber.

Hugo was leading the bent and sombre figure from the ante-chamber towards the portal through which they had just passed. He was whispering directions to the new-comer as to how he was to approach the Pope. At the doorway he gave the stranger's name to the guard, who called it out in stentorian tones as he passed through—"The Knight of Moreleigh, Sir Sigar Vipont, of England, Most Holy Father!"

Brother Thomas turned slowly—all his actions and words were characterised by a grave deliberation—and raised his eyes. He just caught sight of the bowed head crowned with its grey locks, the sad-coloured habit, the broken gait, of the knight. The guards and chaplains had advanced and were standing close behind the Pope. His white cassock and the scarlet cloak falling over it stood out sharply in the glint of the gold back and arms of the chair in which he was seated. Vipont raised his head and strode forward towards the presence; but,

half way across the room, he fell upon his knees and clasped his hands together before his breast. The Pope grasped the arms of his chair and half raised himself to his feet. Then the curtain fell again, and the heavy door silently swung to into its place.

CHAPTER XXVIII

JEANNETTE BLANCHES MAINS FINDS A FATHER

AS the weeks passed, with their tale of shortening days, the University of Paris settled down to a state of comparative tranquillity and peacefulness. The friars had gone. The doctors had followed on their tracks. The decretists were at their daily work of legal jargon, the *sententiarii* busy in disputation, the *biblici* wrestling with the tangles of interpretation and comment. But for a few of the more violent partisans in the schools—a knot gathered here and there at a street corner, a handful warming to their grievances over the wine in some tavern—the University had been transformed into an uneventful and even stagnant place of learning, where the student was too busy with his books to give thought to the vital issues that were being fought out elsewhere.

Below the surface, of course, there were the latent fires and volcanic forces, the prejudices and passions of a divided community. But for the moment, in the schools at any rate, there was a truce. The highest authority in the world had been invoked as the arbiter of their dispute, and, sinking the bitterness of party and faction, the University pursued with an unwonted calm and strenuousness the even tenor of a studious life.

Not so Arnoul de Valletort. He had plunged himself into the old routine with an ardour that was not altogether due to his love of study. But he found it easier

to make promises than to keep them, and far less difficult to drift with the stream of forming habits than to swim against it. The scriptorium of St Victor's saw him busy with his book and pen while the dawn was yet grey in the leaden sky. He was among the last to lay aside his delicate and rather cramped scroll when the signal was given for the nightly repose. But work in itself was not enough. The very keenness with which he had set himself at his tasks soon nauseated him; and the demons of imagination and of memory were not slothful. While the embers that smouldered beneath the placid surface of University life were held in check by the very uncertainty of the appeals made to Rome, the fires in Arnoul's breast glowed with a fierce vigour that work alone was powerless to subdue, and burst into sudden eruptions that appalled him by their very violence. So he had recourse, as was natural in an age of unquestioning mysticism, to prayer, and day after day saw him prostrate before the altar of St Jacques, battling, in his dogged and stubborn way, with himself. It was St Jacques rather than a church richer in name and in holy relics; for was not the presence of Thomas of Aquin, his counsellor and preserver, associated with the sacred place in which his reconciliation was completed? Sometimes, indeed, it was to the great Cathedral that he turned his steps, where, in the vast spaces of the noble pile, the cadences of the canons' monotonous chant soothed his troubled spirit into a sort of lethargy that brought him peace.

But there were times when his whole being seemed to give way under the stress of his temptations. At such times the ponderous tomes of the Lombard were but fuel to the consuming fires. His companions of St Victor's were an unendurable scourge, Roger was

as impossible as he was stupid and unsympathetic, and he himself was a straw—the vain sport of winds that tossed him hither and thither, powerless even to direct his headlong course. Then he hastened, casting aside whatever occupation he was at, to the sanctuary, trusting, in an age of miracles, to a miracle, throwing himself sublimely upon the supreme power of prayer.

By such a course he tended to cut himself off, in a sense, from his fellow-students. He became introspective and singular, living much with his sorrow and his thoughts of Sibilla. But for an incident that scarred his soul to the quick, he would quite possibly have ended in becoming a prey to a kind of spiritual desolation that is not far removed from religious melancholy.

It came about in this wise.

The soul of Maitre Barthelemy was possessed of but one idea—to discover the elixir of life, to hit upon the philosopher's stone, or, at least, to find some means, philosophical or otherwise, of making money. And because of this absorbing preoccupation the astrologist compounded his elements and laboured at the bellows with an ardour worthy of a better cause. Since his return to Paris he had worked continuously at his experiments in the ruinous stone hut standing lonely in the fields back of the Château de Vauvert. But success evaded all his efforts; and no trace of the yellow metal that he coveted was to be discovered in the bottom of his crucibles. He cast about, therefore, in his mind for some other plan of filling his empty purse, and hit upon—Arnoul. Not that the English student had any means of his own that Barthelemy could get possession of. He was as poor as the poorest of the clerks who carried holy water from door to door through the city for a livelihood. But, since Arnoul had dropped out of

the little set that used to forgather at Messire Julien's wine-house, a scheme had been maturing in the alchemist's astute brain.

Briefly, it was this. Arnoul's brother had come to a violent death at the hand of the Lord of Moreleigh—a man reputed of immense wealth. Maitre Barthelemy had means of finding out things when it suited him. This same Vipont, Lord of Moreleigh, had gone on a pilgrimage of penitence to the Pope. What more easy, what more natural, than that in his repentance he should pay a handsome sum of blood-money to the surviving brother? He would, doubtless, pass through Paris on his way back from Rome, and, if his conscience did not prompt him to make amends to Arnoul for his unspeakable crime, why, there were other ways in which he might be forced to do so. Everyone knew the character of the mercenary cut-throats who could be found without much trouble in or near Paris. In any case, Arnoul himself must be secured without delay, and gradually initiated into the details of the scheme upon which the alchemist's fertile brain was busied.

And what was the bait that was to lure the clerk back to the net so artfully prepared? Nothing less than the girl Jeannette. Once married to her, as Barthelemy intended he should be, the astrologer would have a hold upon him.

Maitre Louis, who had proved an apt pupil of the alchemist, was party to the plan that he had hatched, and, having thrown in his lot with so questionable a mentor, and by this time being himself in abject straits for money, he was quite ready to assist him in any villainous undertaking that promised a fair reward.

It was he who brought the girl Jeannette to the

laboratory. The sun was still high in the heavens as they passed the Château de Vauvert, but Jeannette could not repress a shudder as she looked upon its ominous and frowning towers. She thought of the weird and ghostly rumours of the place that had set all Paris a-shivering in superstitious fear. Nor did the cautious and stealthy way in which Barthelemy received them set her mind altogether at rest. Her terror was increased at the sight of the interior of his dwelling and the strange collection it contained.

The alchemist poured out three glasses of his "liquor of gold," expatiating upon its merits. Before long her eyes were flashing, her cheeks burning, and a delicious sense of careless bravado stole over her. This was better than Julien's sour wine! Master and pupil were talking platitudes; but thoughts flashed through her brain in quick succession—brilliant, phantasmagoric, luminous. She knew that she was there for a purpose. Why had Barthelemy wanted her? Why had Louis brought her there? Her voice broke in upon their even talk.

"Maitre! What do you want with me? You don't bring me out from Paris to give me drink—Holy Saints, what drink, too!—and have me listen to your jawing?" Her words were rough, her voice raised and somewhat coarse; but, to look at her, she was no longer Blanches Mains of the tavern, but a creature divine, a goddess in form and feature, and, what is more, a wonderfully beautiful woman. Neither Louis nor Maitre Barthelemy could suppress their admiration.

"No, my dear," answered the latter. "Louis did not bring you here to listen to tales of the last vintage. Take another drop of the divine cordial, my girl! We shall tell you, to be sure. We shall tell you."

His great head was sawing up and down before her, the tufts of hair straggling out of the hood half thrown back upon his shoulders; but there was a look of real affection in his face such as the casual observer would not often find in the lineaments of Maitre Barthelemy.

The girl raised her glass and quaffed deep of the fiery liquid.

"And now, Jeannette, it is for your interest that you are here," said Barthelemy, noting the flush and heightened breathing of the girl. She was ready to see that part of his scheme which he would have to entrust to her in its rosiest light now.

"We grieve for you," he continued.

"Grieve!" she interrupted, laughing aloud. "And why, pray?"

"Why?" replied Barthelemy, not relishing the careless laugh. "Why? Because the Englishman, your lover, has deserted you."

"It's high time for you to find that out!" She began to laugh louder than before. "Englishman—Englishmen! A rotten fig for all the Englishmen in the University, say I! What do I want with your Englishman? Ho! I have a German now—a great, strapping, handsome fellow with curly yellow hair and blue eyes. He can drink more than any man in Paris. He can fight, too. You should see him fight! Then there's the Spaniard. He's a dandy! Wears the most expensive furs to his sleeves and has pointed red shoes—turned up, too. But then he spends most of his money on dress," she added as an afterthought, "so he's not much use. Besides, there's a knight. . . ." She began counting her admirers on her fingers. "You don't know all my friends."

"No," Barthelemy acquiesced gravely. "That is

true, very true. You are so beautiful, my dear. But this Englishman—this Arnoul. . . . He is literally dying of his great love for you. Have you no kind word for him?"

"Kind words, indeed!" snapped Blanches Mains, her eyes flashing. "Fine, kind words I had from him when he cast me off and turned friar! Fine, brave words from a sneaking, canting fellow . . .!"

"But he was distrait! He was bewitched by the tricksters at St Jacques! He did not mean what he said. And, after all, Jeannette, you love him still."

"What if I do?" the girl said sullenly, defiantly.

"This," answered Barthelemy. "I shall brew a potion that will restore him to his right mind and give him power to throw off this monkish enchantment. You love him. He loves you—or will again as soon as he is in his right mind. Therefore you shall marry him and——"

"Saints and devils! What would my big German say?"

"It will be all right as far as the German is concerned," Louis put in spitefully. "I know him for a blustering fellow who is in love with every pretty wench in Paris, both sides of Seine, by turns. One, more or less, will make little difference to him."

"Observe, my dear child"—the alchemist spoke in his oiliest and most persuasive voice, though there was a thrill in it that struck with unusual earnestness—"this is in every sense desirable. This spell that the friars have cast over the Englishman and his fruitless love for you are eating out his heart. You, too, despite your German and your knights—you are yet in love with him; and we, your truest friends, shall count it our highest joy to see your two young hearts united."

The girl sat bolt upright upon the bench, and for an instant the colour ebbed from her face as the strong emotions gripped her heart. Then, like a flash, she grew suspicious.

"Why do you tell me this?" she asked in a shaking voice. "What interest have you in Maitre Arnoul or in me? God's saints! If you are deceiving me, I shall tear your eyes from your heads with my own hands!"

"A nice reward for doing you a service!" muttered Louis.

"You will not believe me?" purred Barthelemy, though now an unmistakable note of sadness sounded in his voice. "Listen! I shall tell you all. In the first place, the brother of this Englishman is dead."

"Alas! That is the cause of all my trouble," sighed Jeannette in a gentler voice.

"Do not interrupt me, I beseech you! The story is a common one. The telling it to you is difficult indeed. This brother was murdered by one Vipont, a man who owns half the county of Devon, in England. He is now repentant; and, to make atonement, purposes giving all, or the great part of his riches, to this same Arnoul. When you marry him, you will be the richest woman in Paris. And you shall marry him. I shall undo this witchcraft of the friars and bring him to your side with vows of love. Yes! You shall marry him. And I shall be the means of bringing the marriage about."

"What reason have you—or Louis"—and she cast a searching look at the clerk's frowning face—"for wishing me to be either rich or happy? I am nothing to you—not at a chance acquaintance."

"No, hing!" exclaimed Barthelemy, strangely agi-

tated. "Nothing? On the contrary, you are everything. Have you forgotten Jacqueline la Mère Dieu?"

"My foster-mother? No; I remember her well," answered the girl, crossing herself as the dead woman's name was mentioned.

"Did she ever speak to you of your parents?"

"No. That is, not much. She told me of my mother—how good she was, and how beautiful. But she was not of Paris. She died soon after I was born. Of my father—nothing. But stay! I remember her saying how he had to fly from the kingdom on account of the doctrines he held. He was a great scholar, a heretic, they said—a follower of Amaury."

"He was not a heretic," Barthelemy said solemnly, "though he did profess the doctrines of the great Amaury. Child, I am your father! Nay, do not start! It was I who left a sum of gold with Jacqueline that she should bring you up. Poor as I was, and hunted from the University as one accursed, I could do that. I found means to provide for my child. Then I travelled southwards and afar, gathering the knowledge and learning the mysteries of all peoples and nations. The hot suns of Egypt have beaten upon my head. I have shivered in the snowy passes of Spanish mountains. My feet the shifting sands of the great desert have blistered. I have gone hungry and thirsty and footsore in my eternal search and quest of knowledge. Yet, from time to time, a trusty messenger brought to old Jacqueline a payment for your upbringing—for you, my unknown child, for you!"

"You are my father?" Jeannette faltered.

"I am indeed your father, child. Come to my arms! The love of kith and kin is stronger than the love of gold. Let these accursed and outlawed

arms fold thee at last to thy unhappy father's breast!"

The man rose, transfigured, stretching out his hands to the dazed girl. She shuddered.

"If you are indeed my father. . . . But how am I to know that what you tell me is the truth?"

"Oh, child, child! Does your heart not teach you to discern it? Is there no subtle argument from soul to soul, no thrill responsive in your very body?" He steadied himself with an affected calmness, and then, modulating his voice to its ordinary purr once more, he went on. "But enough! Have you here your talisman—your charm?"

"What talisman, what charm?" the girl asked, at the same time instinctively thrusting her hand into the bosom of her dress and drawing out the silver disc that hung concealed there, suspended from her neck by a light chain of the same metal.

"Yes; that is it, my daughter! Behold! Upon that plate of metal is engraved the holy Name of God. Around it circle the twelve mystic houses of the stars. But the Name lacketh its first letter and the house of your birth is untenanted. See!" He lifted a similar silver disc, pierced with small circular openings, before her eyes. "Place this upon the other. Turn the plate till the Hebrew characters read fair and straight. The Name of God is completed; the house of your nativity receives you."

He paused, standing with outstretched arms, and trembling like an aspen, as she did his bidding.

"On the day of your birth I cast your horoscope before I fled Paris. I engraved it upon those two plates of silver, giving one to Jacqueline la Mère Dieu, carrying the other all these long years safely hidden in my

breast. I am indeed your father ! Behold the proof of it !”

“Yes, Jeannette,” said Louis to the wondering girl. “Maitre Barthelemy is your father. There is no doubt of it.”

“And you. . . . You knew this ?” The girl turned to him questioningly. “You knew it and never told me of it ? And you, father—if you indeed be my father—why have you not spoken before ? Why have you treated me as a stranger would ? Surely you knew me when you came to Paris months ago ?”

“My child,” replied Barthelemy, “I knew you—yes : and my heart yearned towards you. But my liberty—my very life was at stake. Let me plead this, at least, if I have wronged you ! There are those in Paris who remember me of old by a name—a famous name, a name that all Paris rang with once—but who would without pity drive me forth again, or give my aging limbs to the torture—yea, my body to the flame—did they but recognise me. Had it been known, even to one or two,” he continued sadly, “that a father had appeared claiming Jeannette as his daughter, the ferrets of the University would have found it out, and I . . . ” He made a gesture eloquent of what might have happened had he fallen into their power. “As it is,” he continued, “I am only one more wanderer drifted into this cesspool of human lives, a new-comer hungry for the broken crumbs of learning. None of my old enemies would recognise in these changed features him whom they branded ‘heretic’ and ‘wizard.’ This brow”—he passed his hand over the huge expanse of shining baldness—“was once crowned with raven locks. These arms were strong and shapely when I fled from the accursed theologians who hounded me from the schools. Now my

back is bent with weariness and with age, my face is scored and lined like a palimpsest, I tremble with the palsy, my very speech is tainted with the sound of foreign lands. Do I but remain Maitre Barthelemy, the outcast, the unknown, the inquirer of nature's secrets, I am safe. No one, friend or foe, will recognise in this broken form the young and brilliant scholar who, nigh twenty years ago, began his enforced wanderings."

The girl was impressed by the pathos of his voice and words. The silver talismans confirmed his story. Under the coarser surface of her nature there was a something fine and noble that was responsive to the evident touch of truth and earnestness in the alchemist's broken words. She began to waver.

"But if all you say is true, why do you tell me now?"

"Ah! A natural question! Because now I can trust to your secrecy. Because I wish you to marry this Englishman for whom I have conceived a great affection. You will breathe no word of what I have told you to a soul. I place my whole trust in you. The good Maitre Louis will be equally discreet. I shall contrive to bring you two fond hearts together, and at last you shall have the rightful position that wealth alone can give. Have I, by my philosophy, that these self-appointed censors understand not and condemn, injured the position of my daughter? Mine will be the philosophy that rights the wrong and gives to my daughter the station she deserves. Fill up and drink! I am your father, girl! Come to my arms at last in a filial embrace!"

They drank, all three, of the potent liquor that the alchemist poured out. His face had become absolutely diabolical as he uttered the last words of his explanation. But Jeannette did not notice it. Neither did she

catch the malignant smile that twisted the lips of Maitre Louis. She had heard the story. She had seen the two talismans. Her heart still burnt with her consuming love for Arnoul the Englishman. She tossed off the dregs of the fiery liquor, raised herself to her feet, and with one word—"Father!"—threw her arms about the shoulders of Barthelemy and kissed him upon the lips.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ALCHEMIST PLAYS TO LOSE

IT was next the alchemist's task to get hold of Arnoul. Knowing his habits, he looked for him at St Jacques. But, as there was no one in the friars' church save a few women, he went on, slinking through the Rue St Jacques as though fearful of being seen, crossing the Petit Pont, and finally reaching the Cathedral in Paris itself—Paris the Ship, riding motionless, a mass of heavy stonework and light, filigree carving, on the placid bosom of its own tranquil Seine.

When he reached Notre Dame he made himself, if anything, even less conspicuous, by sinking his hooded head between his shoulders and bunching his ungainly body together. For reasons of his own, with which the reader is already acquainted, he had no wish to draw upon himself the attention of any of the canons who might be about. Even during the time since he had returned to Paris it was not unlikely that some fame of his researches on the forbidden borderland had gone abroad. It was impossible to lie wholly hidden in such a place. Yet, to be discovered now meant scrutiny, and scrutiny—it was possible—might not stop at the doings of Barthelemy the Clerk. He had visions as he stole up the steps leading to the west door, unpleasant visions of possible ordeals; for all the inquirers into the hidden secrets of nature were not looked upon with the best grace by the orthodox. There were alchemists and alchemists—and Maitre Barthelemy knew it. It is

possible that the scheme upon which he was engaged weighed upon his conscience, if he had any rags or shreds of such a possession left, something that prompted him to avoid the public gaze and seek the shady rather than the warmer side of the narrow streets through which he had passed. Perhaps it was the keenness of the autumn wind that made him pull his cloak close about his chin and draw the hood lower down over his brow as he mounted the steps of Notre Dame ; but there was a furtive look in his eyes as he pushed through the carved portal and entered the dim and shadowy nave of the Cathedral. There he ensconced himself beside a pier and began to look eagerly about the sacred building. Apparently he soon discovered the person for whom he was looking ; for, wrapping the folds of his black cloak still closer, he leant back in the shadow and waited.

Arnoul was kneeling far up the nave, in the wan, cold light of the church, wrestling and striving with his own heart, torn asunder by the fierce play of contrary desires. What good was it, he thought, as he knelt before the high altar of the sanctuary, to strive against that sweeping current that had borne him upon its bosom ? It surged and raged about him still—impetuous, torrential. Why strive and agonise ? Even as he prayed, visions of his wild life spun themselves within his brain, alluring, enticing. His lips formed the words of supplication mechanically. His eyes were fixed upon the glittering altar. But there was no answer to his prayer, no blinding flash of illumination, no inrush of spiritual joy overwhelming mind and heart in one great ocean of peace and understanding. On the contrary, there was naught but dryness and desolation. The carved stonework of the altar stood out rigid and uncompromising under its

burden of garish ornament—its shrines, its tapers, its hanging Christ. And between it and him, as his lips moved on in a prayer in which his heart had ceased to join, a vague, impalpable veil seemed to be drawn, a curtain thin as the mist-wraiths that rise from the marshes of the Seine on a summer's morning, cutting him off, even from the outward symbols of hope and of faith.

And as the mist veil danced before his eyes it took shape and colour. He was no longer in the church but in the well-known wine-house of Messire Julien. There was Jeannette smiling and beckoning to him, the heavy-browed Aales leaning forward in her seat as she used to do; Maitre Louis, too, and Jacques, raising the wine-cups to their lips. The reek of the tavern rose in his nostrils. His ears seemed to hear the click of the falling dice, and a voice spoke in his heart: "Why have you left them all for the vain phantasms of a religion you can never feel? These things alone are real. Life is too short, that you should fling it away for dry studies and unfruitful hopes. Up and live! Cast away the thought of duty that lies like a pall over your true happiness! Think not of Sibilla! She is not for such as you!"

His lips moved on in prayer, but the crowding thoughts surged through his heart and burnt like fire in his brain.

At length, with an effort, he pulled himself together. The phantoms, the mist, vanished. An extraordinary feeling of the intensest spiritual joy seemed to take possession of his being. His mind was filled with such peace and happiness as he had not known for days. His very body seemed to have lost its corporeal nature and, joined to throngs of blessed spirits, to be rapt

upwards into a region of warmth and light. On his part, he had been conscious of one mighty effort to throw off the temptation that assailed him. The rest came, as it were, in great waves and surges from without, lifting him, soul and body, into a community of nature with spirits not of this cloying earth. He was no longer the careworn student of the Paris schools, bound down to earth by the five strands of his senses, and battling with the evil demon of self-love. He was a freeman of the company of the elect, purged by a wondrous influx of sweetness, uplifted on the wings of the strongest of God's ministering angels. He saw the altar glinting in a slant ray of pale October sunlight; and he bowed his head upon his hands. His heart was moving with his lips now. He had conquered.

He rose to his feet, made a deep reverence to the altar and, confident in his new-found strength and peace, turned to leave the church. Maitre Barthelemy let him pass the spot where he stood in shadow, and then followed him stealthily to the porch. The lad turned on his heel as he heard the footfall behind him. The alchemist approached quickly, uncovering his face.

"Well met, Maitre Arnoul!" he began, saluting the Englishman with a low bow. "I was at my devotions in the church yonder when I saw you coming out, and took the liberty of following you. And why? The reason? You have never come—no, not all these long months—to hear the remainder of your horoscope. I understand, my friend. Ah, yes! I understand. The grievous loss you have sustained—the great revulsion! But all these months, my most esteemed Maitre Arnoul, have worn the sharp edge from your grief. Is it not so? I could understand—none better, for I have a heart"—and he laid his left hand with emotion upon

his bosom—"I can sympathise, I can enter into the very sanctuary of your sorrow."

Arnoul answered the long-winded salutation abruptly. He had had a hard battle in the church, and did not trust himself sufficiently to unbend and be civil to the man.

"Nay, speak not thus! Stay, my best of friends! Surely you will not thus pass me by! I have discovered"—and here he lowered his voice to a purring whisper and laid hold of Arnoul's sleeve—"I have discovered a new symbol in your nativity. You are born to wealth and honour such as you have never dreamed."

"Let me go, Maitre Barthelemy!" cried the lad, striving to unfasten the alchemist's grasp. "I am overwrought! I am unwell! Let me go in peace to St Victor's!"

"But no!" persisted Barthelemy, nodding his great head slowly. "But no, my most excellent, my most cherished friend! Not to St Victor's! Come rather with me, for I am skilled in leechdoms and shall cure your disorder. Think! A new symbol! The most auspicious of all the signs in the starry heaven! Think, beloved friend, of the high destiny in store for you! And with my aid——"

"Unhand me, Maitre Barthelemy!" said Arnoul through his teeth, at the same time jerking his sleeve away from the talonlike grip of the alchemist. "I will not go with you, and I will not believe your prophecies. I return to St Victor's whence I came. I——"

"Nay, my good friend, I would not force you against your will. No, I shall not force you! Indeed I would not thus obtrude my presence upon you at all, did I not know——"

There the man stopped short, knowing well that his unfinished sentence would whet Arnoul's curiosity.

"Know what?" he asked sharply.

"That you cannot struggle against your fate. What is written is written—drawn in letters of blood, in characters of flame. Come, lad! Come back to your true friends. The maid Jeannette is waiting for you with open arms. Your comrade Louis yearns towards you still, spite of your throwing him over for your new friends. I"—and both hands of Maitre Barthelemy shot out towards him—"I shall welcome you. I shall teach you, as I alone can, how to fulfil that mysterious, high destiny that is in store for you. Come, O best of friends! Come back once more to those who have your truest welfare, your highest interests, at heart."

At the mention of Jeannette's name Arnoul started back, pale and trembling. Was the victory he had just gained over the phantoms to be turned into defeat? The alchemist stirred the deep and turbid waters of his soul afresh. His purring voice sounded in his ears. His outstretched hands were ready to welcome him and drag him back to his former life. Ugh! What was that? He started, horrified. That right hand scored and scarred, shrivelled up and eaten away until naught but the semblance of a human member remained. Had Maitre Barthelemy undergone the torment of ordeal by fire? It looked like it. Just such hands had the unhappy ones who had borne the heated iron bar in their smoking flesh. Just so the open wounds healed, and the skin shrank back upon the shortened sinews. Just so the livid and the purple weals stood out, stretched tight over the knotted bones.

Arnoul shuddered, looking from the withered member to the man's face. And Barthelemy, seeing the look of

startled horror in the lad's eyes, drew his hand back hurriedly and thrust it into his bosom.

"'Tis nothing," he explained. "A falling alembic. A retort heated white hot on the glowing coals and containing precious metal. But, dearest friend, make up your mind to come back with me. We shall all welcome you. All these months of desertion shall be forgotten. You will live once more! You will enjoy the pulsing life of freedom, the joyous life of unrestrained nature!"

"I cannot, Maitre Barthelemy." The boy was wondering, now, what motive prompted the alchemist to entreat him so to return to his old life. "I cannot. I have given my word to Brother Thomas of St Jacques——"

"Brother Thomas!" The alchemist mouthed the name with a fine scorn. "What has the Dominican to do with it? Why, they are fine people, the Preachers, to undertake the direction of others when they cannot even keep their own affairs in the University right! Nay, my friend! Surely you have not given your confidence to Thomas?"

"But I have indeed, Maitre Barthelemy," said Arnoul wearily. Whatever purpose the alchemist had in urging him to return to his former haunts and friends, he did not serve it by attacking the friars. But mistaking the clerk's tone for a sign of weakening, he pursued the subject.

"They fight on a losing side, these friars, Maitre Arnoul. Believe me, they will lose. The forces that are ranged against them are too strong for them to win. All the talent, all the brains, all the traditions of this ancient seat of learning are against them. And their cause is a bad one, at best. They violate prescriptive rights and flaunt the privileges they have obtained from Rome in the faces of those whom they wrong by using

them. Think not, because I am not seen now in the schools, that I do not know the temper of the University! The undercurrents, the scheming and the plotting—I am well acquainted with them all. Your destiny is far too noble, your star gleams far too bright, for you to take sides with the regulars. Ere long they will be driven forth from Paris. St Amour will not leave a stone unturned until he has driven them from the University.”

“Yet he will never succeed.” Arnoul took up the cudgels on behalf of the religious. His voice was emphatic and decided enough now. “He will never drive them forth. The King is strong in their favour. The Pope is sure to support them. And who is St Amour against the King—or the whole University, for the matter of that—if the Lord Pope approves of them? They are harmless and holy men. My patience strains to snapping when I hear the clerks or townsmen cast their lewd gibes at them. My blood boils when I see these pompous doctors lift them up as laughing-stocks. And why, forsooth? Because they are religious, because their lives show up what is false and evil in the others.”

The ghost of a smile flitted across the face of the alchemist. “Religion,” he said, with an upward inflection in his voice and an almost imperceptible raising of his eyebrows, “religion has nothing to do with it. It is a question of politics, pure and simple—a matter affecting the internal welfare of the University, nothing else.”

“But it is religion, I tell you,” insisted Arnoul. “Religion more than anything else! It is because the friars lead good lives and teach orthodox doctrines that they are so persecuted. Why, St Amour has been

suspected of heresy for years ; and the lives of some of the seculars are too well known to——”

“Ah! The friars have been teaching you full well. You prove an apt pupil, Maitre Arnoul. I warrant me, it is your Brother Thomas who has been raking up all he can find and inventing where he finds nothing against the opponents of his order, and pouring it all into your willing ears. Now, if I should speak, I could whisper you some tales of those same holy friars. Did you ever hear of one John of Parma?”

“Brother Thomas has told me nothing of the seculars. None of the friars has ever influenced me against them. Do you think I am a fool, Maitre Barthelemy, not to see for myself? Am I blind, or deaf, or half-witted, to have been all this time in the University and to have discovered nothing? No! Do not interrupt me! The religious have my respect and my admiration. I would sooner trust Brother Thomas than all the doctors of the schools. And, what is more, I will trust him.”

Perceiving that no success was to be gained in this direction, Maitre Barthelemy suddenly changed his tactics.

“Yes, yes, I understand, my dear Maitre Arnoul! Perchance it is as you say. It may be that it is a question touching on religion, after all. The friars may well be holy men, and this Thomas, for aught I know, a saint. Still, they are likely to lose their cause. The pressure is very great, and they have acute and crafty minds to fight against. But you yourself, dear friend! Why tie yourself to them? Why pass by on one side all that is bright and joyous in life? You are young. You are able. You have a magnificent career before you. Come and enjoy life while you may!”

"No! No! No!" reiterated Arnoul. "I have told you that I will not—that I have promised."

"Come! It is worth thinking over! By the way, Maitre Arnoul—I do not wish to seem to pry into your affairs. I trust I am not indiscreet . . . but—you will pardon an old and true friend the liberty he takes!—but Ben Israel, the Jew? You are indebted to him? A small amount? An insignificant matter?"

Arnoul was silent.

"Of course," continued the alchemist, "I am loth to intrude upon private matters. But it so happens that I might be of some slight service to you in this. Indeed, if I can but persuade you to come back to your friends, I could put you in the way of making a sum of money—a very considerable sum of money—a fortune, in short—and that without overmuch trouble."

So! There was a reason for the conversation! It had come out at last!

"And how do you propose that I should make a fortune?" Arnoul asked incredulously.

"In the simplest manner possible," Barthelemy replied mysteriously. "You have but to ask for it. See! Now I have told you! Come back with me to Messire Julien's, where we can be safe from interruption and I shall unfold my plan."

"No. Tell me here if you wish to tell me at all," answered Arnoul resolutely.

"Impossible, my very dear friend, quite impossible! We might be overheard."

"And is it then a crime that you would have me do?"

"By no means! A crime! You are pleased to jest, Maitre Arnoul!"

"What then, that there should be such fear of eaves-

droppers? I will not go with you. Say what you have to say here, or not at all."

"Unreasonable!" muttered the alchemist. "Unreasonable and stubborn! If I throw my dice ill now, I lose the throw; for I risk all."

"Since I cannot persuade you to come," he added aloud, "I must needs speak here, as my sole thought is for your own welfare. But remember, dear friend, that we all want you back again. Maitre Louis and Jeannette—above all Jeannette. She is disconsolate, that poor child!" Barthelemy raised his eyes to the roof of the porch to express his pity for her forlorn condition. "She has wept till she has no more tears to weep. Really, it was cruel beyond nature to desert her as you did."

"To the point, man!" the other interrupted him. "To the point and let me go! I do not wish to hear of Louis or Julien or—or the girl. If you have anything to say, say it and begone!"

"Softly! Softly, dear friend!" fawned the alchemist, shrinking to the wall and drawing his cloak the closer as one of the canons passed them. "I would not anger you, but you must have a heart of stone, and not of flesh and blood, to think of that unhappy girl unmoved. If you could only see her! If you heard her sighs! She is wearing herself to death, pining for you. Ah, Maitre Arnoul! Bethink you what love is in these young creatures! For me, my blood runs cold. I have no thought but for my art, my science, the search for the hidden secrets of nature. But you are young and full of life. The hot blood pulses in your veins. Think of Jeannette, sighing! Think of the cruel way in which you——"

"In God's name, Maitre Barthelemy! What is the

girl to you, that you should speak thus? You try me past endurance! Here you beguile me into speaking with you. You promise to tell me how I can honestly come by a fortune, and you pour into my ears that which I would not hear. Did Jeannette send you to me? Are you her messenger? What is she to you that you should plead for her?"

"Ah! The fortune! A noble patrimony! But—you would not expect otherwise—there are conditions."

"Conditions! I can well believe it! Make speed, man, and say what you have to say! I am unwell! My head reels!"

"And I a leech, dear friend. Come quickly to my humble abode, and I shall heal you. Or, as a makeshift, until it has somewhat passed, a cup of wine and a moment's rest! Come!"

He passed his hand through the clerk's arm.

"No, I shall not come!" Arnoul burst out angrily. "What do you mean by handling me like this? Why do you seek to persuade me? Of what advantage can I be to you?" he continued bitterly. "There is a reason for your fawning and your cant."

The alchemist raised his eyes again and sighed. It pained him beyond words that his devotion should be apprised at so low an estimate. He said as much, and ended his protest with another reference to Blanches Mains. That, he was certain, was the lever which, if properly applied, would move the Englishman—"Besides, there is the maid—the unhappy maid. I should be less than human did I not feel for her and seek to end this estrangement."

"Leave the maid alone, Maitre Barthelemy. Why do you so force her name on my unwilling ears? What has she to do with the fortune that you hold out to me

as a bait? Can you not see that I mean what I have said—that I am determined?"

The alchemist looked at the clerk keenly. Were there signs of wavering in him despite his protests? He fancied he could discover such in the troubled eyes, the pale and agitated countenance, of the young man.

"I shall tell you all," he whispered. "The condition is that you marry the girl Jeannette. It is by her help alone that you shall attain your destiny and gather untold riches. Once she is your wife, I promise you that what I say will come to pass. I, Barthelemy, promise it! And for my part—for I also am necessary—one gold piece in every ten that you receive shall be mine."

More canons passed them. The office was over. One, an old man, with piercing eyes under shaggy brows, and thin, close lips, looked steadfastly at the pair, went on, turned and looked again fixedly at the alchemist. Barthelemy was too much preoccupied in his talk to see the look, but he caught the backward glance and, muttering an imprecation, hurriedly drew up his hood.

Curiously, that little movement, in itself so insignificant, seen by the canon and by the clerk, had far-reaching consequences. They are the small, the almost imperceptible things that play the most important part in shaping human lives. This was enough to nerve Arnoul. A wave of disgust and loathing swept over him. He hated Barthelemy, hated Louis, hated Jeannette. For a moment the concrete temptation that the alchemist had put before him, the specious and confident promises, the thinly disguised appeal to his senses, had unmanned him. Now he stood cool and disdainful.

"Farewell," he said, in a tone that was final, and, turning, walked quietly after the retreating forms of the canons.

The alchemist ground his teeth. He dared not follow. He had thrown his cast—and lost.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BURNING OF THE LIBEL

THE morning sun had broken cold and fair over the hill crest of Anagni in streamers and pennons of grey and crimson. The wind was sharp and keen as it swept down through the valley from the north, so keen that the early risers who flocked to the open space before the grim and fortress-like front of the Cathedral drew their cloaks about their ears and thrust their chilled fingers well into the openings of their hanging sleeves. There were a good many people gathered in the space over which the Cathedral frowned in sightless and forbidding austerity, even before the heavy, iron-studded doors were thrown open to the public. And as the drifts of grey cloud gave way before the golden sun, more and more people thronged into the square. Some unusual event was evidently the cause of so much movement and excitement. The Roman Court had been long enough in their midst to familiarise them with its presence and ceremonies, so that a papal Mass, or a consistory held behind closed doors, would hardly suffice to explain such a gathering. And a gathering it indeed was—a crowd representative of every class of inhabitant that the city and neighbourhood of Anagni could boast. Peasants, vinedressers, oilpressers, husbandmen, had come in from the valley as soon as the gates of the town were opened. There were merchants, rubbing the sleep out of their eyes as they attempted to keep pace with their hurrying wives.

There were lawyers and notaries, some comfortably snuggling into the rich fur trimmings of their capuces, others threadbare and out at elbows, casting envious glances at their more prosperous brothers. There were knights in plenty, crested and plumed, but all on foot, for the most part belonging to no religious brotherhood, though a few templars or hospitallers mingled with the crowd. Common soldiers swaggered in and out; and beggars, improving a golden opportunity, displayed their manifold deformities, blowing upon their chilled fingers and whining for alms alternately.

Women there were, too, in goodly numbers, from the *grande dame* of the period, in camlet, silks and costly miniver, to the humble maid-of-all-work in her rough homespun of undyed wool.

Nor was it the inhabitants of Anagni alone who swelled the crowd before the Cathedral. The residence of the curia had brought a great influx of foreigners to the town, and there were many to be seen in the crowd gathered that morning who, while they had no official position in the Roman Court, had quite as little connection with the townspeople. These, for the most part, were litigants who had taken their cases to one or other of the Roman tribunals for the decision of the Holy See, penitents come before the Penitentiary for release from censures or absolution from reserved cases, pilgrims to the Holy Land or the shrines at Rome, and that curious class of nondescripts whose business in life seems to be an assiduous following of courts from place to place for reasons not obvious. A considerable sprinkling of clerics of inferior rank could be distinguished by the sombreness of their garb amidst the more gay colours affected by the lay people. All were talking volubly, laughing and gesticulating. As soon

as the doors were opened they rushed pell-mell past the guards into the Cathedral and took their places in that part of the nave that was set apart for the general public.

Across the upper part of the church, and before the principal altar, a wooden barrier, covered with cloth hangings, had been raised. Within the space thus enclosed a temporary Papal Chapel had been arranged, with rows of benches on each side for the cardinals and prelates, and a throne draped in silken hangings and with fringes of gold, for the Pope himself. On the opposite side to this throne and a little lower down the church, about half way between the high altar and the wooden barrier, was erected a species of pulpit or reading-desk. It stood well out towards the centre of the nave, in front of the bench of the cardinal deacons ; and it was draped, like the throne, in white. Wooden steps gave access to it, for it stood almost level with the chair under the canopy of the throne, and formed the most prominent point in the arrangement of the chapel. Overagainst this pulpit, on the side where the cardinal bishops sat, was a long table with stools for the notaries. It was furnished with writing materials—pens, sand, parchment, wax, and tapers ; and several books, or packets on closely written vellum sheets, lay before the place of each of the notaries.

While the crowd was taking in the details of the chapel—the lights upon the altar, the vacant throne, the rows of scarlet benches, the ambo, the notaries' seats, the barrier—it went on talking and gesticulating much as it had done in the square outside the Cathedral. The few soldiers on guard, some at the doors, some at the gateway of the barrier, were phlegmatic and stolid, making no effort to keep the people quiet, standing

rigid at their posts, their hands on their drawn swords, content that they did their duty in seeing that no one loitered in the doorway or attempted to force the barrier and enter the temporary presbytery.

With a great clanging of brazen metal the bells commenced to peal, and a comparative silence fell upon the waiting throng. A double file of soldiers—the papal bodyguard—made its way into the church, unceremoniously forcing the crowd to right and left, and leaving a lane clear from portal to sanctuary as they fell into place in two solid lines facing each other. There they stood, shoulder to shoulder, cutting the mass of people into two compact oblongs. The bells jangled on in noisy clamour. Finally, in a great discordant burst, all ringing and clashing together, they ceased to swing.

Then a procession, formed of all sorts and ranks of ecclesiastics, filed slowly into the Cathedral. From somewhere behind the altar, hidden away in the shadowy recesses of the apse, came the sound of singing. It was the chorus of the papal choir, the shrill trebles of boyish voices mingling in unison with and dominating the rhythmical pneumes of the basses as they sang, in the gorgeous simplicity of the traditional chant, their salutation to the Supreme Pontiff.

The procession swung forward slowly, majestically—friars and monks, priests and prelates. The line stretched now from the doorway to the wooden barrier. The mendicants were already moving to their places in the enclosed space. As yet the cardinals had not entered the church. Meanwhile the melody throbbed pulsing on, rising and falling in stately cadences and rhythms, now plaintive, subdued, lamenting, soft as the fall of summer rains upon lush meadows, now soaring, jubilant, triumphant, star-clusters of song born in celestial spaces,

the angels of the rolling spheres, the guardians of the hurtling planets, lifting their full-throated burden of praise as they guide the orbs along their appointed paths.

There is nothing vulgar or common in the ancient music of the Church—a music apart from all other in its staid solemnity. It is nature—the raindrops or the angels; the sighing of the breeze through cypress plumes that stand solemn guard around the sleeping dead; the moaning of the ocean waves; the silvery splash of water slipping from ledge to ledge of rock; the thunder of the groundswell under towering crags.

The chattering crowd was hushed: for the notes wove a spell about its heart. Something reminiscent, something prophetic, stirred in the cadences—a vague, shadowy presentiment of beings not of this world, of unseen presences hovering closely near, of broken bonds and mingling spirits. The Pope was coming. This was his music. The thrill passed from heart to heart, silencing laughter upon the lips, stifling words that trembled on the tongue. Even those to whom such scenes were familiar, with all their attendant circumstances of sight and sound, waited nervous, silent, expectant.

In a far corner stood Vipont the murderer, clad in his sombre, travel-stained garments, more pinched and corpselike than ever. His eyes still burned beneath his cavernous brows with unquenched fire. The habitual twitching of his lips was increased by the nervous tension of the moment.

But for the chanting and the steady tramp of the procession there was no sound in the huge building. Here and there, perhaps, a sharp, dry cough—no more. The cardinals, clothed in their rich dresses of blue

and scarlet, were passing through the barrier, two by two.

The throbbing silence—for the singing and the swinging tread were silence now to the waiting multitude—gathered itself up in a perceptible shudder. It was the utter tension of excitement and expectancy. And then from every throat a shout went up, an acclamation triumphant and inspiring. The Pope, clad in his pontifical vestments, and blessing the people right and left, passed slowly up the aisle between the two rows of his soldiers. The chant swelled louder and louder from the dark apse, rising above the indescribable plaudits of the throng. Suddenly the glint and flash of steel brought the procession to an end, as the bodyguard of his Holiness drew up in compact ranks at the entrance in the barrier.

The Pope, after kneeling for a moment before the altar, ascended the steps of the throne. The cardinals, bishops and prelates took their seats in order upon the benches. The notaries busied themselves with their writing materials, carefully arranging their parchments and examining the points of their pens. The religious stood, drawn together by orders, monks and friars apart, in their places. The crowd was hushed and silenced. The singing ceased. The plenary consistory was sitting.

After a prayer, chanted at some length, one of the notaries stood up in his place and read a document to the effect that the most holy Lord, the Lord Alexander the Fourth, Bishop of Rome and Vicegerent of Christ upon earth, to the glory of God and for the welfare of innumerable souls entrusted to his care, proposed to examine by his cardinals—here the notary read out their names and the patent of their commission—a

libel, writing, document or book, written by Maitre William of St Amour, Doctor of the University of Paris, Canon of Beauvais, and teacher in the University, entitled "The Perils of These Last Times," the said libel having been delated to the Holy See as suspect, erroneous, dangerous, heretical, by the most Christian King, Louis IX., of France.

This was mere formality. The people grew impatient as the notary proceeded, in level tones, through the document. At last there came a pause, and then, silent and expectant again, they craned their necks to see what was going to happen. Even Vipont raised his eyes and stood erect, his great height lifting him clear of the sea of heads. The cardinals, some alert and anxious-looking, others with a studied mask of indifference that effectually concealed their thoughts, seemed all turned towards the little white and brown band of friars. Hugh of St Caro smiled, inscrutable and confident. The Bishop of Tusculum fidgeted with a docket of papers that he held in his hand. Even the Pope turned himself in his throne towards the ambo in the nave, his head slightly inclined under the tiara, his brown beard resting on the white of the pallium.

The notary, in the same level and passionless tone, called out a name: "Brother Thomas of the order of Preachers!"

There was a movement among the friars. They drew back, right and left, as the tall form of Brother Thomas, graceful in its severe contrast of white and black—for he wore the black mantle of the Preachers over his woollen tunic—advanced. A profound obeisance to the Pope, a low inclination to the assembled princes of the Church, and the brother slowly ascended the steps of the ambo. There he stood, erect of body, yet with head

somewhat bowed. He laid the roll of parchment that he carried upon the cushions before him, and rested both hands upon the edge of the pulpit. His slow eyes swept over the assembled crowd, rested a moment upon the many-hued line of the cardinals, the white figure of the Pontiff, sitting now, his head resting upon his hand, the little flock of mendicants, anxious and prayerful, for whom he had come to plead. Then, tracing the sign of the cross upon his breast, he lifted his eyes towards heaven, and in his low and singularly sweet voice, every syllable of which was heard in all the church, so distinct was his enunciation, recited the words of the psalm.

“For lo, Thy enemies have made a noise, and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken a malicious counsel against Thy people, and have consulted against Thy saints. They have said: Come and let us destroy them, so that they be not a nation: and let the name of Israel be remembered no more.”

A thrill went through the church. It was not so much the words spoken as the marvellous tone and bearing of the speaker. This was not their quarrel. The dispute between the seculars and the mendicants had little to do with the good citizens of Anagni. They had come to hear the celebrated Brother Thomas of Cologne and Paris, not to enter into the merits or demerits of the friars; and the effects of this long-standing strife that had been fomented and brought to a head in the University of Paris were of small consequence to them compared to the hearing of the brilliant oratorical display that they expected.

The friar hid his hands beneath his scapular. His face was tranquil, serene, confident, shining with a sort of glory, as he began his defence of the religious life.

With his extraordinary mastery of Holy Writ, his deep grasp of the teaching of the fathers, the calm method of his philosophy, he outlined his discourse, expounding, quoting, explaining. Point after point urged against the religious by their opponents he blunted. Objection after objection he thrust aside. Calumny on calumny he exposed in its true colours.

The Pope sat intent, rigid as a statue carved in stone, his head upon his hand, held in the spell of the friar's voice, in the thraldom of his reasoning. The eyes of the cardinals were riveted upon the pale, earnest face crowned with its aureole of curling hair, their ears drinking in each word as it fell from the mobile lips. A whisper would have been a thunder-clap, so intense was the silence in the great church.

Was it not their quarrel? It was their quarrel—the personal affair of every soul in the Cathedral. As the calm, slow voice went on, drawing out the principles of the Gospel counsels, attacking, defending, building impregnable strongholds, tearing down flimsy barricades of sophistry, the inherent Christianity of every heart stirred in response. It was their quarrel, their affair, none more so. Behind the placid, radiant brows of Brother Thomas, beneath the coarse texture of the friar's habit, there was a brain, a heart; and every brain and every heart took fire in its contact. Brows were furrowed and hands clenched as the accusations of the seculars were repeated. Each man was now fiercely, resentfully conscious that it was his own affair. But the meek voice, in which there was no trace of fierceness or resentment, still fell upon their ears. With resistless, relentless, logic, like the flow of a mighty river, it swept on, carrying all before it. Not a point was missed. There was no flaw in the defence, no answer wanting to

the accusations. It was a doctor who spoke, a master in Israel, to whom the books of revelation and of nature lay open-leaved. It was a saint, whose words so telling and so true rang in their ears, impersonal and unimpassioned.

When he had made an end, there was a great burst of applause which not even the august presence of the Pontiff sufficed to stifle. Brother Thomas quietly and slowly came down from the ambo and, making his low obeisance to the Pope, was lost once more amid the now jubilant friars.

When silence had with difficulty been restored, the principal notary stood up again in his place at the table, and began to read a second document, handed to him by Eudes of Tusculum. It was the judgment of the commission of cardinals appointed to examine the libel. While this document was being read in the monotonous drawl of the notary, the people in the nave were restless. But silence fell yet again as two of the soldiers bore a brazier of burning coals into the centre of the open space before the altar. What was going to happen? The notarial voice ran on:—

“ . . . and since the work, delated to Us, which has been examined and sifted by Our commission, is found to contain perverse sentiments, propositions false, scandalous, erroneous, capable of causing great scandals, most dangerous to souls, keeping the faithful from giving alms to religious and from becoming religious themselves, impious, abominable, teaching a false doctrine, corrupt, execrable . . . interdiction to whosoever keeps, approves, defends it in what manner soever, under pain of incurring excommunication and being held by all the world as a rebel to the Church of Rome.”

The three notaries stood side by side, at their tables, their black robes showing strangely against the whites and scarlets and blues of the other ecclesiastics. He who had been reading lifted a vellum volume from among the books and papers before him, and, preceded by the other two, walked between the rows of dignitaries to the Pope, bearing it in his hands. The three knelt at the foot of the throne, as their spokesman cried out, in his level, unemotional voice—"Most Holy Father! The Libel of William of St Amour, sometime Doctor of the University of Paris, Canon of Beauvais, but by your Holiness' Bull of June 17 last deprived of benefice and dignities!"

Pope Alexander rose to his feet and, turning towards the cardinals, addressed them.

"Most eminent lords and brethren! Ye have heard the words of Our Brother Thomas concerning the religious life and the arguments that have been urged against the friars, both the Preachers and the Minors. You have listened to the report of Our commission upon the infamous libel of St Amour. Nor have Our own words been wanting. Our notaries have drawn up a Bull which has but now been read in your presence. It is Our will that the writing of William of St Amour be presently given to the flames in token of the utter reprobation of the blasphemous doctrines therein contained, and that Our judgment be signed and sealed in this consistory for a perpetual memorial of the same."

He took his seat again, leaning forward as before, his head on his hand, as the notaries withdrew with the condemned book.

The tapers were lit at the long table, and the spluttering wax fell in gouty drops upon the strips of parchment

attached to the Bull as the seals were impressed. The judgment was complete.

A master of ceremonies signed to the notaries, and together they moved towards the brazier. The two soldiers who had brought it in were labouring with a bellows at the glowing coals. The people in the nave swayed forward, on tiptoe, to see. The friars edged themselves out beyond the screen of the ambo. Even the cardinals turned their heads and shifted in their seats. Over all, the Pope looked on, grave, severe, judicial.

The protonotary for a moment held the book aloft in the sight of all the people ; then, with a brief Latin formula, plunged it into the heart of the fire. The leaves crackled, twisted, writhed, like living things in pain. A tongue of flame shot up from the brazier. And the book that had sowed dissensions in the University, that had menaced the work and the very existence of the two religious orders, that had been the cause of anxiety to bishops and kings, that had disturbed the peace, even, of the Roman Court, was reduced to ashes.

CHAPTER XXXI

THOMAS AQUINAS JOINS TWO LOVERS

“AND so,” spoke Vipont, “knowing who I am and what I am, you will allow me to come? You will let a murderer be one of your company, tread the same road, embark in the same ship, journey with you back to Paris?”

Thomas of Aquin stopped and looked his companion full in the eyes. They were pacing together the cloister of the Dominican house at Anagni.

“My Brother,” he answered gently, “why should I say you nay? Is there not joy in heaven over the repentant sinner—and shall there not be joy upon earth? Did the Master refuse converse with those whom He came to save? Besides, has not His earthly Vicar already loosed the fetters of your sin?”

“True, true!” muttered the knight. “Yet I am a murderer and an outcast. The blood of God’s priest stains my hands. And even if the guilt be forgiven, the fact remains. Accursed being that I am, what penance shall I do to work a life’s atonement . . . ?”

“The Penitentiary? What penance did he enjoin?” asked the friar, anxious to draw him from too morbid a contemplation of his sin; for the man’s remorse was pitiful to see.

“I am to build a church at home in Devon and found there perpetual masses in expiation of my crime. Alas, my crime, my crime, that yet cries to Heaven for vengeance! Will it ever be atoned? Unhappy man

that I am! The anguish gnaws my soul! I have no tears left in my eyes to deepen the furrows on my cheeks! I am——”

“Peace!” broke in the friar. “That which is loosed on earth is loosed also in heaven. You will accomplish this penance. You will build a stately church and endow a priest to celebrate the mysteries there. That is your part. For the rest, your sin is forgiven you. Dwell not upon it!”

“I cannot but dwell upon it. It is too awful, too hideous; and the burden of my guilt is more than I can bear.”

The unhappy man stood and rocked backwards and forwards in the vehemence of his grief.

“What shall I do? A lifetime spent in penitential exercise is not too much. The scourge and the castigation of the flesh, fasting and silence, penance and prayer. You, my brother—I heard your discourse on the religious life at the Cathedral—even you friars, on whose souls the talons of sin are not set fast, live penitent and mortified. I, who am torn and scored with evil—I——”

“You mistake,” the friar interrupted gently. “You mistake. We are all prone to evil. No man is exempt. Even among the friars there are those whose lives belie their calling. We are not all—though we may try to be—saints. Already there is the clash of the contemplative and the active life in the orders. Already there are relaxations creeping in. There are those who do not keep their holy rule.”

“And you say this?” said Vipont, looking up with a gleam of hope in his sunken eyes. “You say this who defended the religious life before Pope and cardinals? You, whose profession is one so high, so holy, give hope to such as I?”

"There is no soul created by God for whom there is not hope," answered Brother Thomas solemnly.

"And even such as I might become a religious?"

"Undoubtedly."

"My Brother, what a load you lift from my heart! Even I could embrace the religious life?"

"But certainly, if no natural ties stand between you and the vows."

"If?"

"You have a daughter?"

"Yes," Vipont replied wonderingly. "I have a daughter. But what of her? How know you that I have a daughter? She can enter her aunt's convent. She can become a nun. There is no difficulty on that score."

"You would force her into religion against her will—with no manifest vocation?"

"Force her . . . ? No, I should not force her into a convent against her wish. But she will go. She will wish it. If it is only for her father's sake, she will do it."

"You are certain? How can you know? Has she shown signs of vocation? Is her heart set upon serving God in the life of the cloister?"

"Truly, Brother, these are questions beside the point. She will become a nun if I but speak a word to her. She is an obedient daughter. And her portion will secure for her some post of honour in her convent. She will succeed her aunt, perhaps, as Mother Abbess. She will——"

"Sir," Brother Thomas interrupted the knight's reasoning, "I have no desire to recall your mind to that remorse that preys upon it. If I speak of the murder of the priest, Guy de Valletort, I speak without

passion and without censure Who am I that I should blame whom God's Vicar has absolved? But bethink you! Is it not more awful to place a soul in jeopardy than to slay a man? Is it not a greater crime to force—even though it be through obedience and by paternal love—your daughter into a high and holy state to which she is not called than to send the soul of the priest, de Valletort, before his Maker? Understand me! If your daughter is called by God to serve Him in religion, rejoice indeed and give Him thanks. Put from you the thought of honour and give her to serve Him in the lowest place. But, if she be not called, beware how you tamper with the designs of the Almighty! Better for you and for her——”

“But, my Brother, how can you speak thus if you believe what you said before the consistory? How can you place a bar between souls and the religious life?”

Vipont flared up, almost as of old, impetuous and masterful. The Dominican replied gently.

“I place no barrier. 'Tis the barrier of nature that a supernatural hand must remove. If your daughter be called, thank God and prosper her going. If she be not called, thank God again and force her not. But to the point! Has she the signs of vocation?”

“Nay,” replied the knight, bending his eyes upon the flagged paving of the cloister. “She is obedient and dutiful, but, on this one point, she is . . . she is . . . A child's fancy, my Brother; the passing fancy of a maid. She thinks she is in love. On this one point she has crossed me. She is unmaidenly and froward. She has confessed her love—alas! alas! that I should say it!—for the brother of Sir Guy de Valletort. A poor clerk, forsooth! A beggarly clerk, though—I confess it!—of good lineage. But a man of no estate or position.

And, my God ! my God ! 'tis his own brother for whom I am to do my penance ! ”

The friar started as he heard the broken confession of Sibilla's love for Arnoul. He laid his hand upon the knight's sleeve as, speaking with a singular tenderness, he said :

“ Sir, let me tell you a story. There was once a young man—a boy—whose desire it was to enter the religious state. Every obstacle was placed in his way. His brothers took him prisoner and held him close to prevent him. He escaped. His mother wept. He made his heart stone. The Holy Father himself argued with him. He pleaded. Threats and temptations, imprisonment and bribes, his mother's tears, the Pope's intervention—yet he is now a friar. The ways of God are wonderful and past comprehension. If there is a vocation, it will be manifest. If there is none, leave the issue to God.”

The friar spoke with intense feeling. It was the first—the only time that he had ever spoken of his own entrance into religion. Yet it was his own tale he told so briefly and so baldly. His words gripped the knight. He straightened his bowed form.

“ And what would you have me do ? ” he cried. “ Would you have me publish my Sibilla's unmaidenly love to the world ? Who is this Valletort ? An upstart, a clerk, a beggar ! He would listen and spurn her—the daughter of a murderer. My sword rusts with his brother's blood. Nay ! I am accursed and lost, but I still have my pride ! This Arnoul de Valletort—I shall give him to the half of my possessions. But I shall not—no, never shall I !—publish my daughter's madness. Brother ! Brother ! Have you no pity for me ? Are the hearts of the friars adamant ? Cannot you understand a father's pride ? ”

"I understand," said Brother Thomas quietly. "Yes, I understand ; but God's ways are not our ways. What if this youth should love your daughter and sue honourably for her hand?"

"But he is naught but a poor clerk."

"Yet, I have heard, of noble blood."

"He is a beggar."

"We are all beggars in the sight of God."

"An ecclesiastic."

"Not yet in sacred orders."

"And he hates the name of Vipont."

"Your daughter . . . ?"

"Sibilla is a fool, distraught, bewitched. That she should bestow her heart unasked—and on a beggarly clerk! Besides, it is clearly impossible."

The knight's head sunk forward again and his voice changed.

"Between them flows an ocean of blood. You forget, my Brother, that I am a murderer."

"I forget nothing," replied the friar. "And what is more, I know the young man of whom you speak. He is a youth both upright and honourable. If your daughter loves him, he loves her no less, with an affection true and deep. You ask my counsel. Let them love, and leave the issue to God."

"But, Brother, it cannot be. I stand between them and the spirit of Sir Guy. How could Arnoul de Valletort marry the daughter of his brother's murderer?"

"It would heal a feud," answered Brother Thomas. "'Twould be better than to force your daughter into a nunnery. Leave the matter to Providence. It will come right in the end."

The knight bowed his head and covered his eyes with his hand. A light wind stirred his grey hair and the

threadbare cloak that he wore. He was altogether pitiful—so different from the old knight of Moreleigh. Even the momentary flashes of the old pride that made him forget his misery when talking to Brother Thomas of Sibilla and Arnoul were the last flickerings of a pride that was spent. His sunken eyes expressed, in those rare moments when they were raised, none of the fierce and haughty spirit that once characterised him. He was an aged and broken man, with no hope or wish to do more than take refuge in some austere house of penance in atonement for his crime. If there was one interest left to him in life, it was his daughter Sibilla. Around her person he centred all the ancient glories of his house. He was an outcast; but the Viponts were not dead. In her the pride that he had lost should live again. She should be mistress of Moreleigh. She should rule as Mother Abbess in the great Benedictine house at Exeter. The love that she had confessed to him was a wayward fancy, a hideous mistake. She should conquer it, and rise above so low a passion to the true greatness of her position. If he were to disappear in some obscure cloister, she at least would shine worthy of the Viponts' name and station.

The unhappy knight had learned but half his lesson. He looked upon his crime morbidly—but as an isolated factor in his own life, not as affecting others. That it could have consequences, other than the definite separation of Sibilla and Arnoul, he did not seem to realise. He was not selfish, perhaps, in the ordinary sense; yet, in this one point, he thought of himself alone.

The Dominican watched him sympathetically. He seemed to understand the struggle that was going on in his heart. He read the man better than Vipont knew

himself, and he knew that his appeal to Providence would have the effect of calming his distracted passions.

"Will you be ready by two days from now?" he asked. "We travel at daybreak to the sea, and thence by boat to France."

"So soon!" exclaimed the knight, forgetting grief and daughter in his surprise. "I had thought your business here not settled. The doctors, it is said, are still instant at the court for a reversal of the judgment on the condemned book."

"Ah!" said Brother Thomas slowly. "But I have naught to do with that. My work here is done, and I return to my post at Paris, leaving the whole question to those to whom belongs to settle it. Christian of Beauvais and Odo of Douai and Nicholas of Bar have submitted. Only St Amour stands aloof. Please God his heart, too, will be touched!"

"But have the three really submitted? I understood that they were trying to have the Bull revoked, and the condemnation of the 'Perils' removed."

"They will not succeed," Brother Thomas answered softly. "The future of the mendicant orders is in God's keeping, and in that of His Vicar Alexander."

"But they have approached Brother Humbert, the General."

"With no success. What help could they have had in that quarter?"

"And they have made suit to the cardinals who judged the book. They have besought Brother Bonaventure to listen to them."

"Vainly," replied the Dominican.

"They have produced the instrument drawn up last July between the religious and the University."

"Without effect," said Brother Thomas. The subject

was evidently distasteful to him. "These things I know. They have sued and pleaded and argued in vain. The three I tell you of have given way. They have sworn to obey the Supreme Pontiff in all things. The Bull *Quasi Lignum* they have promised to observe to the letter. They are ready to receive the Friars Mendicants into the fellowship of the University and never to transfer the schools from Paris. Moreover, when they return, they will publicly retract the false and wrongful preaching that they have made against the friars and their rule, and publish in every quarter the condemnation of 'The Perils of These Last Times.'"

Thomas of Aquin spoke like a child speaking by rote. The humiliation of the University emissaries was for him no cause for congratulation. Their scheming and plotting, even their outspoken denunciation and defamation of the friars, left him unmoved. He was tranquil and calm because he was above it all. Gossip, too, and the tattle that circulated so freely, he detested; and so he recounted for Vipont's benefit and to draw him from his sad and remorseful contemplation of himself, just what had taken place, no more. And this he told as simply as the matter stood, without colour or animation.

The knight raised his head abruptly, with a trace of his old intolerance. He had heard the measured terms of Brother Thomas' discourse in the Cathedral with wonder. Now, he was amazed; for he had looked for some expression of rancour in a private conversation upon the subject, even if it had been sedulously kept out of the public address. But no. The friar was unmoved and impassible. He only opened his eyes in a kind of mild surprise as Vipont pursued the subject.

"Ay! They have given in, the caitiff cowards—

slinking back from their master the Pope like beaten hounds that they are! Leaving their leader to fight his cause alone! They eat their words, these great doctors! They promise everything and swear all oaths. But St Amour——”

“Enough of this unhappy dispute, Sir Englishman! Let us rather rejoice that the Lord hath touched the hearts and opened the eyes of three, at least, of the seculars. And let us pray for the fourth, that he may find peace and a good conscience. Enough! Enough!”

“But let me speak! It eases me to speak. I feel a certain fellowship with the order in pouring out my spleen and hatred upon its enemies.”

“And yet, my friend,” Brother Thomas replied sadly, “if you were of the order such a word would show how little you were of its spirit. Alas, that it should be so! For there are such among us.”

“Then, not being of you, shall I hate as proxy for you all. This son of Satan, St Amour, this proud and puffed-up doctor, this persecutor of the elect—whom may God curse——”

“Silence!” broke in the friar, his voice trembling with emotion. “Curse not the man, but his errors! Bless him, and pray for his misguided soul. You do not know his heart nor can you read his conscience.”

“Yet he presumes to defend his teaching and to argue that it is true,” said Vipont, half abashed at the brother’s rebuke.

“Have you heard his words?”

“No, but ’tis said——”

“’Tis said. ’Tis said”—for Brother Thomas the voice was almost petulant. “Listen, I shall tell you all. I do not defend St Amour. Indeed, I think—I fear—

he cannot be defended. But neither do I curse. I reprobate and anathematise his errors—but the man . . . I would win him to the truth. Hearken! Thus the matter stands. A copy of his libel was delivered into his own hands. Glancing at its contents, he took up his defence.

“The book,” he said, “has not always had this form. It has been written and rewritten with the greatest care at least five times. I have corrected it and made additions. I have cut out and altered and given a more precise sense to all herein advanced. I believe this copy that you show to me is one of the third compilation that I made. I am not certain, but I think it is the third. Perhaps some defect, some fault, some error has slid into it. The copyist may have altered my original sense. If the Pope has found cause to condemn it, it must be for an error of this nature; for I am assured that he does not wish to impair or touch in any point the witness of the Holy Scriptures that I have gathered together. If the case be thus, far from contradicting his judgment, I adhere to it with all obedience. But, if he had seen the fifth, or even the fourth, compilation of these witnesses, he would have found nothing in it to offend any Christian soul. He could have discovered nothing worthy of censure, nothing to condemn. Rather would he have praised me for my labours and approved of the doctrine that I teach.”

“That was his line of argument?” asked Vipont brusquely.

“So he defended himself,” replied the friar.

“Wounded pride, cowardly shuffling, despicable lying! If his doctrine was judged false, how could he prove it true? Let him bring all the texts of the

Gospels together and it avails him nothing. It is the interpretation that counts."

The brother made a gesture of assent, and Vipont continued :

"Such men are a danger to the world. They twist the truth itself to suit their errors. What is to be done to him? Will he be adjudged heretic? And the punishment—what punishment will he have?"

"He will be deprived—indeed he is already deprived—and banished from the kingdom of France. God send that he be brought to the truth in his banishment! He will go, doubtless, to his estates at St Amour in Burgundy."

"And live there honoured and unpunished!"

"His doctrine is condemned, his chair taken from him, his voice silenced—what more could his worst enemy desire? But, sir, neither of us has a right to judge him. I have spoken with some heat and at more length than I ought. Forgive me, and let us both pray for this poor, misguided man.

"You will be ready to depart with us?" he asked, abruptly changing the subject.

"Yes, my Brother, I shall be ready."

"And you will leave the matter of which we spoke to the providence of God?"

A shade crossed the knight's face, and he sank into his brooding melancholy once more.

"You will let God dispose of your daughter's future?"

"Yes, my Brother." Vipont's voice came low and trembling.

"And you will put aside your late uncharitable thoughts of the young man, Arnoul de Valletort?"

"I have no uncharitable feelings, Brother. Indeed, I crave his forgiveness for the great wrong I have

done him. I shall do my best to make him some amends."

"Of that we shall speak again. It is a long journey to Paris. And forgive me for that word 'uncharitable.'"

"There is nothing to forgive, Brother. I bear the youth no grudge. Still, it is hard to think of him as beloved by Sibilla, the last of the Viponts of Moreleigh. When I think of it my wrath returns. I burn with shame and hatred. It is your pardon I must crave, Brother, not you mine."

"We shall pray for one another, all of us, that divine charity and peace may come down from on high and take possession of our souls."

Brother Thomas stood transfigured, as it were, in the sanctity of his thought. A slant October ray fell upon his forehead and kissed his eyes, that gazed, seemingly, out and through the world of visible things to the realities beyond. Vipont looked up at him involuntarily, and, caught in the strange influence of this wonderful personality, he fell upon his knees.

"Your blessing, my Brother, and may we in very deed be knit together in the bond of love and peace!"

The young brother laid his outstretched hands upon the old man's bowed head. The liquid syllables of the ancient tongue flowed richly from his lips: "*Benedicat tibi Dominus, et custodiat te. Ostendat Dominus faciem suam tibi et misereatur tui. Convertat Dominus vultum suum ad te, et det tibi pacem. Amen.* God be with you; and two days from this we journey to Paris together."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BURNING OF THE ALCHEMIST

ON the morning of November the nineteenth—a bitterly cold morning, by the way, for the heavy grey clouds that the north-east wind sent scurrying, low and ragged, across the sky effectually prevented any warmth penetrating into the narrow streets of the City—Arnoul set out from St Victor's and made his way towards the Petit Pont. He walked rapidly, muffling himself in his cloak, stamping his feet upon the stone cobbles of the pavement to warm himself. He was, thus early, on his way to the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Few persons were abroad. Those whose business forced them to be out of bed at such an inclement hour hastened along as he, wrapped to eyes and ears in capuce or cloak, looking neither to right nor left, intent upon the affairs that condemned them to so early and so cold an outing.

Arnoul passed into the University by the Porte St Victor, crossed the Bièvre near the house of the Cistercians, and made at once for the Rue St Jacques. Turning to the left, he hastened towards the bridge leading to the Island of the City, and, crossing it, he turned again, this time to the right, towards the Hôtel Dieu. As he traversed the open space before the Cathedral church he was aware of a little procession leaving it. It could hardly be called a procession, so small was it; for at most it was composed of six or seven persons hastening like himself, though in a con-

trary direction, through the bitter grey morning. He would not have noticed it at all had he not caught sight of the sombre robes of the Archbishop's Official. That he should be walking with one of the Cathedral priests at such an hour—and this latter clad in simple surplice and black stole—arrested his attention. They were doubtless on their way to the execution of some poor criminal. Such scenes were frequent enough at times, heaven knows—the black-stoled priest and the Bishop's Official, or the King's Official, as the case might be. These meant a burning or a hanging—something worse, possibly.

The melancholy procession turned out of the square towards the right as he entered it, evidently making for the Grand Châtelet, and disappeared in the street that leads past the Priory of St Eloy.

Arnoul made his way into the Cathedral and, kneeling in the nave not far from the door, waited for the capitular Mass. He had not been long occupied in his devotions before he felt a touch upon his shoulder. Someone had followed him into the church. It was Roger, his face beaming with good news, his breath coming quick from running.

"Yes?" queried Arnoul, as he turned to see the honest eyes looking into his.

"Dear lad!" the man panted. "Who, think you, is arrived in Paris? I have run all the way from St Victor's with the news, and"—ruefully—"without leave or licence of the Sub-Prior, too, to be the first to tell you."

"Who?" asked Arnoul vaguely. "Surely not the Abbot? It is too early for him to be voyaging to Citeaux. Who is it, Roger?"

"Ah! That's the news!" the man exclaimed.

"Whom, think you, but your Brother Thomas of whom you are always speaking?" The boy's face lit up with pleasure as Roger went on. "And who, think you, is with him—has come from Italy in his company? You will never guess, I warrant you!"

"Who, then, Roger? Who indeed? Good things never come singly. Is it Brother Bonaventure of the Cordeliers?"

"No, lad. Guess again."

"St Amour in chains, with his libel dangling about his neck?"

"No. Neither a friar nor a doctor, but—you will never guess!—no less than Sigar Vipont himself, on his way from Rome to Moreleigh!"

"Ah!" A shiver shook the lad's frame. He rose unsteadily to his feet.

"How do you know this?" he asked.

"I saw them both with these two eyes of mine," the man made answer. "I knew you were looking for the home-coming of your friar, and I made friends with the guards at the gates. He came by the Porte Papale. As soon as Pierre le Louche told me, I made what haste I could to follow them; and I saw both knight and friar before they reached the Convent of St Jacques. Then I came on here, running all the way, to tell you."

"Thank you, Roger," said the young man earnestly. "You are a true, good friend to me, and, God knows, I need friends now, if ever I did. With Vipont here in Paris, and Barthelemy plotting to ensnare us both——"

"Barthelemy!" exclaimed Roger, turning pale under his tan. "Barthelemy the alchemist, the astrologer?"

"Yes," Arnoul answered, wondering at the man's demeanour. "What of him?"

"And have you not heard? Did I not tell you? I had thought every soul in University, Town and City knew by this time! Barthelemy the sorcerer—my God! he was a friend of yours!—He is to be burnt within an hour at the stake in the Place de Grève."

"Burnt!" cried the lad, horrified at the thought. "Burnt! What has he done? Bad as he is. . . . Oh, blessed saints! To be burnt alive!"

He started back in dismay, forgetful of the place and time. In the far distance the choir of canons was singing *in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis* of the Gloria.

"Burnt! Just heaven! What has he done that he should be tied to the stake?"

"Done?" answered Roger dryly. "What has he not done? From all one can hear this morning—and the whole place rings with it—he is guilty of every imaginable offence. He is a wizard and a sorcerer who holds communion with the devil. At least that's what everyone is saying. He is a poisoner, too, and a friend of Michael Scot. He's been in hiding for the last twenty years at the court of the Emperor Frederick. In hiding—for he was condemned twenty years ago for the crime of heresy. But come out into the square, lad, and I shall tell you what I know, and if you listen you shall hear all, for everybody is talking."

They left the Cathedral and found themselves at once in a sort of backwater of the stream of people pouring across the Island on their way from the University to the Town. The square, almost deserted when Arnoul had passed through it an hour before, was alive now with hurrying forms. Arnoul plied the man with questions. His brain began to recover from the sudden shock caused by the two facts so unexpectedly thrust into it.

He strove to piece together a coherent story from the scraps of information that Roger could give.

"When was Maitre Barthelemy taken?" he asked.

"A week ago, at least," said Roger.

"And where?"

"In his dwelling behind the haunted Château. 'Tis there he sold himself to the devil, they say."

"Was anyone taken with him?" The question came sharp and anxious.

"No one that I have heard of," replied Roger. "At least—that is—there was some mention of a clerk being apprehended, but after the trial he was set at liberty."

"Great saints, how awful! How terrible!" exclaimed the lad. And then—"What was the accusation? Where was he tried? Who sentenced him? How know you he is condemned?" The words came with a rush from the quivering lips.

"One question at a time, dear master," protested Roger. "God wot, I am not the Official, to know everything. That he is condemned is clear; for, if you hasten, you will see him burnt. Therefore he must have been condemned. And for what? And by whom? By whom but by the two Officials, severally and jointly? The proof, they say, was positive; his identity, his evil-doing, his witchcraft. He bore marks of the trial by fire. His right hand was burnt to a cinder. Maitre Jehan, Canon of the Cathedral, recognised him and swore, with others, to his person. He was accused of heresy, of sorcery. Some say that he is not human, but a vampire, and will not burn."

"And Vipont?" asked Arnoul suddenly.

They were being whirled along in the thick of the crowd now, over the Pont au Change and through the Châtelet towards the Grève. Had they wished to go

back it would have been impossible, for a great concourse of townspeople filled the Châtelet square and surged forward to the entrance of the street that led to the Grève. All the narrow streets were pouring forth their streams of people, the two bridges providing scant passage for those who were coming from University and City, clerks and students, ecclesiastics and civilians, with women, women everywhere. Paris had not had such an interesting burning to look forward to for many a long day.

"Vipont," ejaculated Roger, striving to keep his place by Arnoul's side—"you would not know him, he is so changed. But you will assuredly see him yourself. He is certain to rest awhile here after his long voyage. Saints! What a press! Make towards the left, over there, where the Grève is freer."

They stood at the outskirts of the throng in the Place de Grève. A dull sort of humming rose from the crowd. It was good-humoured and expectant, discussing the taking and trial of the sorcerer. In the centre of the Place, but nearer the river than the houses of the Town, a low platform or scaffold of rough, unhewn wood was raised. It consisted merely of lengths of timber lately cut, and stood on low supports driven into the ground. In the centre, one stake protruded from the unsightly mass, rising to a height of some five or six feet above the platform. A layer of faggots was heaped about its base, while a pile of dry wood was stacked upon the ground close by. The grey clouds were still racing across the sky. Suddenly a trumpet sounded from the Châtelet, and the people shivered. The crowd opened right and left as with a brisk step a detachment of the King's Guard crossed the square and stationed itself around the place of execution. It was followed closely

by the two Officials, one of whom Arnoul had seen in the morning, several notaries and the black-stoled priest. In the tense silence that followed the blare of the trumpet his low voice could be heard monotoning the psalms of the office of the dead. Then, pinioned by soldiers, came the black form of the Magician Barthelemy. He walked with a slouching gait, his great head sawing up and down and a frightened look in his shifty eyes. His lower lip hung loosely, and he mumbled incoherently to himself as he walked.

Whatever official formality was necessary had apparently already taken place, for he was led straight to the stake and hurriedly chained to it. He had been handed over to the King's justice.

Every eye was fixed upon him as he stood, or rather leaned, hanging forward over the chain that encircled his waist. His head was yet free, and the executioner was fumbling with the iron collar that was to fix his neck to the stake. The priest stood close by him, upon the pile itself, whispering into his ear. Suddenly he raised his head and held himself erect, his face twisted, his eyes glaring, and poured out a stream of blasphemies so terrible that even the crowd shrank in horror. The priest made a gesture of despair and strove to speak to him. The executioner, seizing his opportunity, slipped the chain about his throat and, passing it behind the stake, fixed it there. He drew the two ends of a thin rawhide cord, that seemed twisted in and out of the links, together at the back and tied them in a loose running knot. Then he made a sign to the priest to descend. The soldiers drew up close. The condemned man raved and cursed, growing purple in the face with his impotent fury. The chains prevented him from falling forward, but every now and then his head slipped down

sideways as far as the iron links permitted, and he mowed and gibbered vacantly. Then he would pull his head up again with a jerk and, the light of madness in his eyes, scream out his blasphemy and cursing once more. The executioner crawled beneath the low scaffold, and in a moment the curling blue smoke showed that the pile was lighted. His assistants heaped the dry wood upon the faggots up to the malefactor's knees. He blasphemed on, unheeding.

A piercing shriek rent the air, and a girl struggled forward from the crowd.

"Father!" she cried. "Father!" And she strove to break through the ring of soldiers.

Barthelemy turned his head and cursed her as she fell fainting to the earth. A tongue of flame ran up through the crackling faggots and licked his feet. A wreath of pungent smoke was driven across the packed throng. It wrapped him round like a winding sheet, and trailed off, torn by the wind, above his head. The flames were rising to his knees. Yet he blasphemed.

Then the executioner jumped up suddenly behind him upon the scaffold. Seizing the ends of the cord that he had been so careful to tie, he drew them tight with a quick jerk and fixed them to the stake. This was mercy—the mercy of the fire. Barthelemy's eyes started from his head. His blasphemies were silenced for ever. His lips went black. For an instant his hands worked spasmodically and then were still. The licking tongues of fire mounted to his breast. Thick curling masses of smoke wrapped him round. But he was already dead. The fire wreaked its vengeance upon a corpse. The gusts of wind wafted the sickening odour of charred flesh towards the crowd.

Arnoul turned, sickened, from the hideous spectacle.

He had covered his face with his hands long before, but, wedged in by the crowd, had not been able to leave the spot. Now he staggered and would have fallen had not Roger supported him and half dragged, half pushed him away. How they managed to win clear of the throng Roger never knew, but by dint of dogged pushing and elbowing at last they were free. They did not look back to see the people pressing forward to get a closer sight of the execution, but they heard the hoarse clamour that heralded the end ; and, even where they stood, the reek of the burning came to them.

So, having fought their way out, sick and faint, and in utter silence, they regained the deserted University.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ARNOUL CHANGES HIS VOCATION

IN the afternoon a messenger came to the Abbey from the Convent of St Jacques. Brother Thomas of Aquin desired to see Maitre Arnoul, if possible, at once. Of course it was possible; and he returned with the messenger, his mind yet reeling with the events of the morning, apprehensive of a meeting with Vipont. It was as he expected. Both Brother Thomas and Sir Sigar awaited him. But there was not, at first, at any rate, the abrupt awkwardness that might have been looked for in the meeting of the three men. The personality of the friar, the friend and confidant of both the others, robbed the situation of most of its difficulty and embarrassment. He came forward with a kindly smile upon his usually impassive face, and grasped the young man's hand in his.

"So!" he exclaimed—and his voice was richer and more magnetic than ever. "So! We are back in Paris once more. We have come safely, by God's grace, through perils of sea and land, and have reached home again at last. And how has it fared with you, Maitre Arnoul, in the meantime? Nay, tell me not, lad, for I already know. I can see that you have kept your promises and"—he nodded his head slowly two or three times—"I can see that you have won safe through the straits to which you have been put in keeping them."

His searching eyes seemed to read the boy's very

soul and to discover there the story of his struggles and temptations.

"See!" Brother Thomas continued. "We have had a companion on our voyage—one you know, or knew, in your Devon home. Arnoul, are you ready to forgive him as you yourself would be forgiven?"

The young man bent his eyes to the ground, and a dull flush crept slowly over his face. He thought of his brother lying far away in Woodleigh churchyard. He thought of Sibilla alone in her cell at Exeter. It was a hard, sharp struggle, brought thus face to face with the murderer, and asked to forgive him freely, but it was a short one. Still keeping his eyes averted, he answered in a scarcely audible voice:—

"My Brother, as far as in me lies, I forgive all my enemies as I would——"

The friar uttered a sigh of relief. This was the one point that he had not quite been able to foresee when he brought the two men together and committed the issue to God. Vipont sprang forward, interrupting him.

"De Valletort, I have most grievously wronged you. I have wronged you above measure and beyond repair. Can you—have you forgiven even me?"

Arnoul faltered. Raising his face for an instant, he caught the burning gaze of Sir Sigar fixed upon him, the almost troubled eyes of Brother Thomas watching him. He looked away again.

"As far as I can forgive, I have forgiven," he said, the colour ebbing, leaving him deadly pale.

The knight stretched out his hand, but, catching sight of the revulsion stamped upon the lad's features, dropped it again with a sigh.

Brother Thomas intervened. "Arnoul, if you say that you forgive, you must forgive freely and wholly."

Again the dull flush crept into the lad's cheeks.

"You must forgive as God forgives—without reserve."

His breath seemed to catch in his throat, a sensation of oppression to come about his heart. The brother's voice, the brother's personality, was making itself felt.

"You must not grudge charity in your forgiveness, nor stifle it with self-love."

Something like a tear glistened for a moment on the lad's cheek. Slowly he raised his eyes and held out a trembling hand to Vipont. Brother Thomas had conquered the first citadel.

But there was another to storm and subdue; and to this Arnoul must lay siege for himself.

Vipont's demeanour had changed on the instant. He seemed to throw off the weight of years in the relief of the reconciliation. What the papal absolution from censure had not done, what the certain fulfilment of his penance could not do for him, the touch of de Valletort's hand had accomplished. He was suddenly younger and less bent. The very lines seemed softened upon his brow, and around the hollows of his eyes. He almost smiled, though he could hardly speak for his emotion. At length he regained command over himself and thanked de Valletort brokenly and humbly for his forgiveness. And as he spoke his tones grew vibrant and strong as of yore. He became the old Sir Sigar at his best, polished and courteous, without a trace of the violent intolerance that had been the cause of all his misfortunes.

Before him stood Arnoul, grown, since he had last looked upon him, into manhood. What a strong, fine fellow he was, to be sure! The knight ran over his points, as one would run over the good points of a horse, summing him up—the swell of the muscles in the neck

that spoke of healthy strength, the clear, bronzed complexion, the frank, grey eyes, the set and poise of the head. The lad was tall—almost as tall as Sigar himself—and developed in proportion. What a girth of chest he had, this clerk of Paris! And the pity of it was that he was a clerk, with an ambition bounded, probably, by a canon's stall, an aim no higher than a Church lawyer's task.

His heart warmed to this brother of the man whom he had slain; and, as he thanked him, he pondered how he could best offer him some substantial token of his repentance without offending the lad's pride of feeling.

At last it came, brusquely enough it seemed to the poor knight, who tripped and stumbled in his words as he made it. And yet there was a certain delicacy in his offer of one of the richest manors of Moreleigh. The proffered gift, with all the rents, revenues and manorial rights it implied, was certainly no mean one; and, what is more, the fields and forests and moorland tracts that it included had anciently belonged to the house of Valletort. Arnoul knew the manor well. Sir Guy had pointed it out to him many times as part of the ancient heritage that should have been his.

But he would not hear of accepting it at the hands of Vipont. Gently as he might, but firmly, he refused the knight's offer. It was blood-money! How could he take it?

Sir Sigar hesitated, but he was not silenced. Thinking that other fields and forests might prove a greater temptation to the clerk, he made offer, one after another, of parcels of his vast lordship. But Arnoul steadily refused any gift soever; and at last poor Sir Sigar, perplexed and distressed, broke out:—

“Is there nothing I can give to you, de Valletort, to

prove the sincerity of my sorrow? Have I no possession worthy of you that I can offer? Or will you stop short in your forgiveness, and spoil all by not letting me make such poor reparation as I can?"

Thus addressed, Arnoul looked Sir Sigar full in the face and spoke:

"Sir, I have no desire for your pasture lands or forests, though I recognise the kindness that prompts your noble offers. I could accept no rich gifts, even did I need them, at your hand in recompense for my brother. You have nothing with which to atone for his death. I have forgiven you, Sir Sigar. Thank Brother Thomas there that I have been able to do so. But one thing will I ask of you, neither gold, nor lands, nor lordship. Sir, I love your daughter, Sibilla. Give her me to wife."

The Lord of Moreleigh started back, the smile gone from his lips. It was his turn to raise the old barrier of his pride against the newly made reconciliation. The fierce opposition stilled by Brother Thomas at Anagni, when the possibility seemed so far off, surged anew in his heart now that de Valletort actually sued for Sibilla's hand.

"It may not be," he said sharply. "It cannot be."

But Arnoul, once he had burst through the gates of reserve, went on.

"Sir, believe me, I love your daughter truly. I know I have nothing to offer but an ancient name. But I can carve a fortune for her with my own arms. Give me but time, and I shall prove myself no unworthy suitor. Or, if you cannot betroth her to me, give me at least leave to win her for myself. I——"

"You are a clerk," said Vipont bitterly. "Take the manor I offer you, and go your way while I go mine."

I cannot give my only daughter to you. You ask too much. Anything else—to the half of what I possess—but not this.”

“Sir, I ask nothing but leave to win your daughter’s heart.”

“You cannot ask it, being what you are.”

“Yet I ask, and ask again.”

“You are a clerk and not a knight.”

“A clerk, truly ; but I can win my spurs.”

“And how?”

“I shall become squire to some good knight and do battle for my honour that I may prove myself worthy of the Lady Sibilla.”

“But your vows!”

De Valletort laughed aloud. “I have taken none. I am as free to go from the University as you to leave Paris. Give me but one word of hope, and I shall prove it to you.”

“Lad,” said Vipont, his heart going out to the boy, and his old traditions of knighthood glowing in his breast, “I believe you. But where will you find a knight to take you as his squire?”

“I know not,” Arnoul replied. “But surely in this land of France there are knights and lords in plenty. I shall find one, never fear, if you do but give me hope.”

“Is it possible?” Vipont muttered to himself. He turned to the friar standing silently by. “Brother,” he said, so low that de Valletort could not hear him, “Brother, think you, might I become his knight? I like this boy. His spirit goes straight to my heart. I shall commission an architect to begin my church, and ere it is finished in the building, he will have won his spurs. If he can do this, and prove his valour, he shall have my Sibilla. Then will the church be built, the

penance done, my girl provided for, and I can go at last into a peaceful refuge where I may atone for my crime."

The old knight began valiantly enough, but his speech ended with a ring of sadness. It seemed impossible to him that Brother Thomas would approve his so suddenly matured scheme. But the friar was a mystery. For a few moments he bent his head in thought. Then he said slowly: "There is no reason why you should not do this thing. The lad will without doubt prove himself worthy. He has no vocation. Let him win the maid. But, bethink you, can you take the field? Where will you lead him? What cause will you espouse?"

"Those are simple questions to answer," the knight made reply. "I am not so old but I have strength enough to teach him the courtesies of chivalry. He will find his lord and win his spurs here in France. He has a stout heart and daring. Mark how he spoke! And he will always fight on the side of the right. Come, Brother, already I love the boy, whose life I have so far spoiled. Give me the word and I shall teach him how to win Sibilla. Afterwards, I shall persevere in my intention, and seek some cell where I may purge my sin by penance and die, at last, in peace."

Then he turned to Arnoul again, asking, "How old are you, de Valletort?"

"Twenty," answered Arnoul, wondering.

"You have never been a page?"

"No. You know I was brought up at Buckfast with the monks."

"A pity! A thousand pities! You should have been a page when you were eight; at fifteen or sixteen, squire to a knight. You would have learned all chivalry

by this time. Still, it might be done," he muttered to himself. "Such things have been done before. It shall not fail for lack of trying."

"You can ride?" he questioned aloud.

Arnoul laughed a frank, ringing laugh.

"Ride? I should think so. What lad from the moorlands of Brent or Holne but can ride?"

"And you are strong. Your clerkly life has not turned your muscle into fat. And well knit, too. Yes, it might be done. It might be done.

"Listen to me, de Valletort. You have lost full twelve years of training for the accolade; though, even with the monks, you doubtless learnt something. They have taught you gentleness and reverence, at least, in the cloister, such as befits a good knight no less than a true religious. What you have not learned you can learn apace now. What say you to becoming my squire for a year? I shall teach you all the knightly lore that I know. A murrain upon the King that he has stopped the tourneys! But you shall ride with me and learn. There are no near wars afoot where we could serve; besides this old carcass would be in but sorry plight in warfare now. But war or no war, I shall train you; and when the times comes, if you are an apt pupil, I myself shall stand sponsor for you at your knightly consecration. Then—when you stand a knight proved and dubbed—you have my leave to lay siege to my daughter's heart."

"Sir," said Arnoul, thoroughly mystified by the knight's sudden change of front—for his eyes now sparkled with eagerness and excitement, and he seemed as anxious to remove all obstacles to the suit by getting the boy knighted as a moment before he had violently opposed it—"Sir, what you propose justifies any fair

means of attaining it. I love Sibilla and will shrink at nothing to win her. I would be your squire without a second thought. . . . I would bear your arms with joy. . . . But you—you are old, too old to take the field again. Your age forbids it. I shall find some good knight, be sure, who will take me as his squire and——”

But Vipont interrupted him. “There is no necessity to take the field, de Valletort,” he said. “Indeed, you are right. I could not if I would. But I can instruct you in knightly bearing and in all the practices of chivalry. And thus, tutored by me, and sponsored by me, you will come in the ordinary course to your consecration. No! It is not necessary to protest. I am an old man and a knight whose days of deeds are passed; but who better than her father, failing others of your own blood, could fit you for knighthood and my daughter?”

The words rang like clarions in the young man's brain. Should he accept this offer, at least, with all its attendant train of favours, or refuse? He looked towards the friar. Perhaps he would help him to decide. But Brother Thomas was dreaming, seemingly, or wrapped in contemplation. His expression was placid and spiritual. If he had heard what the knight was saying to the young man, he had apparently paid no attention to it.

“You mean,” said Arnoul to Sir Sigar, “that you will teach me all that befits a knight to know, so that I may come to that estate without deeds of prowess?”

“Yes, that is it,” Vipont made reply. “But it is an honourable service. Now that the crusades hang slack, and jousting is not as it was, there is scarce another way. Come, de Valletort! Do you accept my offer?”

"Where, then, should we ride?"

"Time enough to think of that. Here, to begin with. Later, perchance, to Burgundy or even back to Devon. It may be that I shall have to overlook the building of the church." And the old knight sighed.

"You promise me that, when once I stand before you as a knight, you will listen to my suit?"

"You make no suit to me, de Valletort, that I should hearken."

"You will give consent to my making suit to"—the name came softly from his lips—"Sibilla?"

"You have my consent."

"'Tis well! Sir, I accept your offer. For a year I am your man. I will be obedient and attentive to your instruction. Brother—Brother Thomas!" he cried. "You who have counselled me and heartened me, have you heard? I am Sir Sigar's squire! He takes me as his squire to train me for knighthood. Do you approve? Do you bless this resolve? Or am I wrong—faithless to Guy?"

"Oh, Blessed Mary!" groaned Vipont. "And am I wrong? It might have been Nunant. Old Nunant would have taken him. Is it wrong for me, an accursed man and his brother's slayer, to stand sponsor for him before the King?"

The Dominican turned towards the young man, the pupils of his eyes contracting as though focussed to an unusual object.

"I approve," he said briefly; "and I bless. You have forgiven all, Arnoul?"

"I have forgiven all."

"And you, Sir Knight, you accept the lad as suitor for your daughter's hand?"

"Provided he be dubbed a knight, I accept him."

"'Tis well indeed," said the friar. "Remember, Master Squire, the meaning of the office that you seek. There are true knights and false, just as there are true clerks and false, good religious and bad. In this world light and shadows intermingle. As it is the office of the friar to be poor and humble, a man given to prayer and penance, austere, zealous and, above all, obedient, so it is that of the true knight to be a Christian worthy of the arms he bears. His to be valiant in his service, faithful to his lord, a succourer of the poor and the oppressed, defender of the wronged, upholder of virtue and, above all, true to his God, his King and his own knighthood.

"And you, Sir Knight," he added, turning to Vipont, "methinks you have a call to other and to higher service. This work is permitted you for a season. Look to it that you do not lose, but rather gain, in teaching this young man his knightly craft. Close not the ears of your heart to the voice that speaks to you. Let not the din and clamour of the world drown its whisper. Be faithful—faithful both. And may God have you in His keeping!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE TRAINING OF A SQUIRE

THE new squire had much to learn. All that he would have come to know as a page, waiting upon his lord and lady in their baronial hall—gentleness, faithfulness, obedience—Vipont drilled into him from morning until night.

The Lord of Moreleigh was never tired of recounting tales of his own boyhood; and his early Cistercian training had already formed Arnoul on lines that made it easy to practise all that Sir Sigar taught him. All—save for one thing, and that his love for Sibilla supplied.

The elder man was evidently living in the past, and took an almost childish pleasure in teaching the novice whom he had adopted. But he never alluded, not by so much as a single word, to his daughter. He spoke of the high ideal, the chivalrous devotion, that a true knight ought to have for his lady. But his speech was of a lady that was not of flesh and blood. And the young man, sharp-witted and quick to understand, throned his heart's image in the niche that Vipont decked with high and noble sentiments, and silenced the word that was ever on his tongue.

He was taught to tilt with a blunted lance at a target, a shield swinging from a fixed post; first on foot, as he ran past it, then mounted upon the charger that had been provided for him. It was dull work, especially at first; but the interest grew as he learnt to rush full

gallop at the swaying blazon and, with one straight thrust breaking its leathern supports, bear it away from the post and hurl it to the ground.

Proficient in lance play, he was initiated into the mysteries of the sword.

Sir Sigar, feeling himself too old to teach him, engaged a master skilled in the use of long glaive and stabbing sword. But he was ever present at the young man's lessons, applauding and shouting out encouragement as he thrust and parried and hewed at the opposing blade of his master. Lance and cross hilt and pointed sword and faussar—one by one he mastered them all. His quick eye and youthful strength helped him; and before long he knew as much as his tutor could teach.

Clad in a suit of closely woven hemp, to which steel rings were sewed in overlapping rows, so that the surface turned the sharpest sword, protected at elbow and knee and shoulder with poleyns, vambraces and shoulder plates, and wearing a low steel helmet over the conical mailed hood that protected forehead and chin, he parried the thrusts and blows that the quick sword of Master Alain rained upon him. A great pad of quilted cotton protected the lower part of his hauberk, and even in the practice he wore the steel alcato beneath the helmet. Altogether he was weighted with the unaccustomed burden of full armour. But little by little he became used to the heavy mail, and more and more dexterous in his fence. The stiffness of the hauberk and the vambraces impeded him somewhat, until he learned to strike wide from the shoulder, guarding his body the while with the circular buckler that hung on his left arm.

In the horse exercise he was more at home from the

first. One had but to sit straight and hold the lance well aimed, and ride hard ; and Arnoul, mailed coat and chausses and all, sat his beast as though he were one piece with it. Old Vipont shouted approval ; and Roger, who was nearly always present at these warlike exercises, grinned and chuckled as, with a sound of tearing leather, the wooden shields came tumbling to the ground, and de Valletort reined his horse up on its haunches not a spear's length from the post. He made a fine picture, too, sitting on his sleek and glossy mount, whose silken housings were dispensed with in lance practice. Lithe and graceful, notwithstanding the thickness of the mail, every steel ring on hauberk and hood and chausses glittering like silver in the sun, the long, straight shaft of the blunted lance poised easily, with its pennon fluttering, and beneath the helmet and above the collarium, where the square opening of the hood was, ruddy cheeks and bright eyes looking out—he made a fine picture indeed for Sir Sigar and Roger and Master Alain to look on.

And thus they waited in Paris through the winter, until the soft, green buds of springtide began to break on tree and hedgerow, Vipont giving advice and applause, and Master Alain the practice, while honest Roger looked on and chuckled as he saw his own Master Arnoul develop into so great and so doughty a warrior.

And when the spring had fairly come, and the birds began to build their nests in the leafy branches, Sir Sigar bade his squire and Roger prepare to ride abroad. They were to take road to the sea, and cross over into England once more ; for the knight was anxious about the building of his church, and wished to see its walls rising with his own eyes.

There were three thoughts now that occupied him: Sibilla, the fulfilment of his penance, and Arnoul. He was quite ready to betroth the two when Moreleigh church was built, and before he found his rest in the Abbey cloister. But first de Valletort must be dubbed knight, and that, he thought, would be as easy of accomplishment in England as in France. Baldwin de Redvers would surely give him the accolade, or even Henry himself, if he could be got at.

Before they left Paris and France, to ride through Normandy to the sea, they were to have audience with that greatest of all monarchs, King Louis IX.

Brother Thomas, Arnoul had seen from time to time during the winter. Twice he had spoken with him. He was to meet him for the last time in the King's palace. It was only a few days before their departure that he and Vipont rode from their hostelry near the Temple to the City. Leaving their steeds with the pages in the great courtyard, they were admitted to the throne-chamber of the King. He was seated, not upon the throne under its dais, but upon a low settle or couch covered with cushions and brocades. His dress was of the finest and richest materials, but plain in the extreme and unrelieved by any ornament. A short cloak of black figured silk hung back from his shoulders; while his sleeveless vest and undervest of dark greyish-brown were guiltless of either gold or jewels. His long, flowing hair fell to the shoulders from under a little cap.

The King was not alone. The majordomo of the palace, a group of lords and King's knights, a pair of court chaplains, were in the room, and seated near the King himself was the Prior of St Jacques with another friar whose head was bent so low that his face was invisible.

Louis received them kindly and spoke to them of England and the King.

"Not so long," he said, "since our Brother of England was with us, and his Queen, our Sister. You have not forgotten, I warrant me!"—this with a side look at Arnoul.

"Our good students of Paris," he continued, "had a gay time while that same our Brother of England lodged at the Temple."

Arnoul coloured under the King's gaze. How did Louis know that he had been a student, he wondered. The King meanwhile toyed with a little metal cross that he held in his hand.

"And now he is back in his kingdom. He is a good King—a good King," he murmured. "But his barons . . . Who knows? Who knows?"

Suddenly the friar raised his head and brought his closed hand down with a bang on the low table before him. Arnoul recognised the face. It was that of Brother Thomas. King Louis started slightly, and the Prior looked dismayed.

"I have it! I have it!" came the rich, full tones of the brother's voice, half dreamily, half triumphantly. "This argument is conclusive against the Manicheans!"

The Prior pulled at his habit. "My Brother Thomas! Brother Thomas! Remember where you are!" he whispered. "The King . . . ! The palace!"

But Louis only smiled as the friar, recalled to himself by the voice of his superior, began an apology for his distraction, and the King calling one of the chaplains to his side, bade him then and there commit the argument to writing lest it should be lost.

"The words of our Brother Thomas," he said, "are words of gold—too precious to lose, too weighty to

carry in the memory. Write them down, write them fair and clear, Maitre Robert, as though you copied a page of Holy Writ itself."

And while the scribe made ready his materials and took down the words of the argument from the lips of Brother Thomas, the King turned again to Arnoul. "So! You are the young squire who aspires for the honour of knighthood! 'Tis a noble calling and one of which princes and even kings are proud. To fight for justice sake, to deliver the blessed Sepulchre from paynim hands. . . . You have thought of this?"

"Yes, Sire," de Valletort answered modestly. "But there is now no fighting in the Holy Land."

"True! True!" King Louis sighed. "The Lord of Hosts has not blessed our arms. We bore too many sins with us to the conquest of the infidel. But we shall make the attempt, please God, again, when our forced truce is over." Then he added abruptly, "You are a strong fellow, Master Squire. You will make a strong knight. See that you be a worthy one. Do you seek knighthood of us?"

But Vipont interposed. "No, Sire. He has been squire but a few months, and there is more for him to learn ere he can lay claim to his knightly spurs. We ride for England in a day or so. Perchance King Henry may raise him to knight's estate."

By this time the King's amanuensis had taken down the reasoning of the friar, and Louis turned towards him.

"Well, my Brother Thomas, what think you of our young squire—your young squire, perhaps I ought to say? Here is a sturdy recruit lost to the Friars Preachers! Bethink you, is it better to be a friar or a knight?"

"It is as God wills, Sire. There are some He wishes to be knights of the Lady Poverty, others knights of the sword ; for there are many gifts. This youth has no vocation to a friar's life, but, if God so wills, he will make a good knight. Whate'er or where'er he be, he can serve God truly."

"I am a knight," the King exclaimed, "and I am a friar! A knight to fight the battles of the Cross, but a friar in my love for the two orders! Could I tear myself in twain and give one half to my brothers the Preachers, the other to my brothers the Minors, I would be content."

Brother Thomas smiled. "Sire, you are a knight indeed, and you are a friar indeed, if love for Christ can make you both. And you are a king as well. But knight or friar or king, 'tis all one, so long as you serve God and fear Him."

King Louis rose from the settle and pushed his long hair back from his brow.

"You say truly, my Brother. It is the spirit that quickeneth ; and by the spirit, verily I am both knight and friar. Your blessing, my Brothers!"

And the King inclined his head as Brother Thomas knelt humbly beside him, giving place to the Prior, his superior, who traced the sign of the cross above them both. It was the sign that their audience was over. Together knight and squire left the chamber with the two Dominicans.

But before they mounted and rode away, Arnoul had a word with the brother alone.

"You have heard," he asked, "that we depart shortly for England?"

"I heard it ; and may peace ride with you !"

"It may be, Brother, that I never return to France."

"That is as God wills."

"And never see you again."

"On earth—possibly. God grant that we may meet in heaven!"

"I can never thank you enough, Brother, for all that you have done for me."

"No thanks, my son, are due to the servant. Thank the Master for His loving-kindness. You do not praise the chisel that cuts the stone, but the hand that points it."

"Still I would thank you for your goodness. I have never thanked you, and you have done so much for me. But for you, Brother, and your helping hand, where should I be now?"

"Thank me then, my child, by loving God. Be a good Christian in a world of evil, a true knight where there are many false."

"That, with God's help, will I. But, my Brother, before I go. . . . The King asked you for your blessing, but the Prior blessed. You will not refuse to bless me and my new life? A blessing that will go with me in all my undertakings. A blessing that will strengthen me in every trial. . . . The blessing of the hand that raised me when I was in the mire."

De Valletort fell upon his knees and caught the friar's hand in his, raising it reverently to his lips. Vipont's voice called to him from the courtyard. Brother Thomas drew his hand away and laid it gently upon the lad's head. With eyes upraised to heaven he called down the blessings of the Almighty upon the young squire's every undertaking. The accents of his musical voice struck on the lad's ears, and the words sank deep into his heart: "*Benedicat te omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.*"

De Valletort rose to his feet. Vipont was calling him again. With a hasty gesture of farewell, his eyes met those of Brother Thomas and read naught but peace in their depths. He hurried out across the courtyard to the knight. The Dominican rejoined the Prior, who was walking slowly on, and as Arnoul sprang into the saddle he looked back to see the two religious. The younger friar's gaze was bent upon the earth, and with his hand he was telling the beads of the rosary that hung at his side.

That was the last Arnoul saw of Brother Thomas of Aquin, as he rode northward with the Lord of Moreleigh towards the fortress of the Templars.

Two days later he left Paris.

CHAPTER XXXV

A FIGHT AND A REWARD

THREE mounted travellers were slowly making their way towards the old port at Houlgate, from which their Norman ancestors, two hundred years before, had set sail to the conquest of England. They were travelling slowly, apparently because one of their party was infirm ; for, though all three rode armed, his hood was unstrapped and lay back upon his neck. Also, he leaned forward painfully in his saddle, as though unable to sit erect upon his horse. Two rode together behind, the sick man and another whose nasal helmet hid what otherwise might have been seen of his visage through the opening in his hood. At his saddle-bow hung the helmet of the other. The man who rode ahead was clothed in a leather jerkin over which hung a loose vest with arms, made of rough hempen stuff diapered all over with stout twine knots. His hood was of padded cloth under the low cylindrical head-piece. This was Roger equipped for travel. The two who rode behind him were the knight, Sir Sigar, and his squire, de Valletort.

They had journeyed through France and Normandy from Paris, and were drawing near to their journey's end. A few leagues only lay between them and the sea ; for already they had left Evreux in the rear and were making towards Caen.

All along the route they had traversed they had found the castles being fortified, as if for war. This, they

learnt, was by order of the King of France. Masons and armourers and victuallers they had met in plenty, together with bodies of soldiers on the march. But, avoiding for the most part castles and fortresses, they had lodged where possible in the guest-houses of the monasteries and friaries that they passed. Everywhere they had been well and kindly received, with the ready hospitality that made the religious establishments of the time so famous. And indeed, but for the guest-house and the hospitable cloister, travelling would have been almost as generally uncomfortable as it was often dangerous. Besides, what with the bustle and activity of the army of workmen at every castle, village and town, accommodation of even the poorest kind would have been scant. The old knight preferred the quiet and peace of a Franciscan or Dominican house, or the more stately lodging of some great monastic establishment, to the precarious chance of an honest landlord and a sober crowd in an inn.

Many of the monks or friars at the religious houses where they stopped had heard of Vipont and his pilgrimage to Rome, for there was an almost constant stream of people crossing between England and France, and news of all sorts passed rapidly from place to place. Doubtless, those who had heard of the murder, or remembered it, had expected to see a murderer of a very different type from that which Sir Sigar presented; and many were the glances of pity and commiseration bent upon the aged and feeble old man as, having thanked his good hosts for their hospitality, he rode away, bowed and dejected, from the convent door.

Now they had reached a desolate tract of country. There seemed to be no building of any kind in sight, and the sky lowered threateningly. The road, too, was

deserted, and the beams of the sun, filtering through the murky, piled-up clouds, warned them to press on if they would find lodging within walls either sacred or secular before the threatening storm broke upon them.

Arnoul was doing his best to animate the flagging spirits of the sick knight and urge him onwards towards some place of shelter, while Roger, faithful scout as he was, forged ahead to discover some sign of habitation where they might find refreshment and a bed for the night. In less than an hour the sun would have set, and the road was not altogether a safe one, even for three armed travellers. A peasant, who had pointed the way out to them a few leagues back, had warned them of the danger. Marauding bands of robbers were not infrequently to be met with on the way to the coast. In particular he bade them be on their guard when they reached a certain wood, the features of which he described minutely to them. For here the road passed near the castle of a lord who found it more profitable to waylay and rob small parties of travellers than to grind the faces of his own unfortunate serfs and tenants. The peasant had spoken bitterly — doubtless with reason — and had repeated his warning when their paths sundered. By Arnoul's computation they should not reach the wood in question at the rate they were travelling for a good two hours, and he hoped to find shelter long before that. Roger was on the lookout in advance. So his chief preoccupation was to cheer his companion, and to draw his mind from the melancholy brooding that had settled upon it.

"Hasten! We must hasten, my lord, if we would find a harbour from the night and the weather," the young squire was saying, as he tried to stir the jaded spirits of his companion.

The knight looked up vacantly. "Ay! We must make speed," he said. But his horse jogged ahead as before and he made no effort to spur it on. Then he fell to musing aloud.

"Bethink you, de Valletort, are we right, thou and I, thus riding together side by side—I who slew thy brother and thou? Have I not done thee a further wrong, joining thee thus in the company of one who is blood-guilty?"

"Peace! Peace, I pray you, Sir Sigar!" pleaded the young man. "Have I not forgiven thee? Has not the Holy Father loosed the bonds of thy sin? Did not Brother Thomas bid me take service with thee as thy squire?"

"Yea! Yea and nay! Oh, accursed sinner that I am! I repent me of my evil deed. God wot, I would wipe it out in my own blood . . . my own blood! But hither ride we together, thou and I—thou the victim and I the slayer: and the price of thy service is my daughter Sibilla. Oh, de Valletort! Release me of my promise! I cannot, I dare not buy thy reconciliation thus!"

"Release thee? That will not I!" said Arnoul through set teeth. "I have forgiven thee—fully and from my heart. But thou hast promised, my lord. Thou hast promised upon thy knightly word. I hold thee to it. I serve thee for thy daughter's hand. For a year will I serve thee—for two, three, years if thou wilt, and until I have found a lord to make me knight. But I shall not go back. Thou wouldst not have me go back upon my resolve. Nay, lord! Thou thyself wouldst not break thy engagement, cost what it may!"

"True words! True words!" the knight murmured as if in pain. "I have pledged my knightly word. I,

who am an outcast and an accursed being, have given my promise. I will hold to it."

"Then away with these sick fancies, my lord! Set spurs and let us ride apace! There is Roger hurrying back towards us. Doubtless he has discovered a place of refuge for the night. And the storm is on the point of breaking. See, yonder, how the tongues of lightning flash! Even an outhouse or a cavern were something in this waste!"

The knight lurched yet farther forward in his seat, silent and brooding. He took no interest, so it seemed, in the finding of shelter. During all the time that de Valletort had been his squire he had not seen him so depressed. So he rallied him with cheering words as they jogged forward to meet the returning Roger.

It was soon apparent that he brought other news than the discovery of a building where they might take refuge. He sate low and rode hard, galloping up to them through the gathering storm-darkness.

"Master Arnoul! Master Arnoul!" he shouted along the road. "For the love of God! Make speed forward, an you wish to win your spurs! Travellers in distress. And two of them mere lads! Set upon by a band of ruffians!"

He drew a short sword as he panted out the words and turned his horse in the direction from which he had just come.

"What is that you say, Roger?" cried Arnoul sharply, unhooking, as he spoke, Sir Sigar's helm from his saddle-bow and passing it over to the knight.

Vipont sat up in his saddle with a strange glare in his sunken eyes, and commenced fumbling at the strap of his hood in preparation to putting it on. The lightnings were playing fast now, and great, sparse drops of

rain fell heavily upon the frightened horses and their riders.

"What is it, Roger? Who are these travellers? How know you they be attacked by villains?"

"Parley not, good master, for the love of Christ, but come!" cried the man, with difficulty reining in his panting, trembling steed. "Or, ere you can reach them, they are done! I saw the party riding, as we, for shelter. A band of armed cut-throats sprang sudden from the thick wood by the roadway. They are close at hand. The spur, Master Arnoul! The spur, for God's love; and to the rescue!"

Even Sir Siger was stirred. He shook off the melancholy that possessed him and urged de Valletort on.

"Go! I shall follow, and if any fight be left in these old bones——"

But at the word Arnoul was off and at full gallop down the road. The lambent flashes flickered on his drawn blade and seemed to ripple like water up and down the bright steel rings of his mail.

"England!" he shouted, "and Vipont!" whirling the sword above his head and changing his buckler from its sling to his left arm. Roger, shouting out advice, lumbered heavily at his side.

"There are four of them, master: two sturdy knaves and two striplings."

"How many against them?" Arnoul shouted back.

"I could not count. Six or seven, they seemed. The knaves had reined in and drawn sword. I saw no blazon."

"They were hard pressed?"

"The assailants—some mounted, one or two on foot—bore iron maces, glaives and daggers. A felled trunk blocked the passage."

“Forward then!” cried Arnoul. “Press forward!”

A sharp turn in the road brought them suddenly in sight of the attack. One of the men was dismounted—his horse flying riderless down the road. Setting spurs, Arnoul took the low barrier and was at once in the thick of the unequal combat, Roger still at his side. The assailants turned, with fierce oaths, to the new-comers. Now the fight was closer matched—six armed men to nine, two of whom were on foot. One of these had closed with the unhorsed knave. The leader of the attack, a huge man clad in rusty black armour, wheeled suddenly and made for de Valletort, whirling a spiked iron club high above his head as he came at him. An unsheathed dagger glinted at his waist-strap as he sawed with his left hand at the shortened reins. Arnoul raised his buckler to intercept the blow descending, his arm bent at the elbow to lessen the shock. A sharp clang of metal upon metal, and the arm fell limp and powerless at his side. The edge of the buckler had turned the heavy mace aside; but it was bent and crumpled like a piece of paper.

But the squire had not only been on the defence. As his opponent swung the heavy weapon up for a second blow, he stood up in his stirrups and brought his sword down with a sickening crunch upon the other's arm. The good steel quivered with the force he put into it, and the mace fell harmless. Again the arm was raised to strike, and a second time the sword descended on it, this time breaking off short in Arnoul's hand with the violence of the impact. The man, with a yell of pain, dropped the mace from his nerveless fingers. It hung dragging by its rawhide thong from his wrist.

In the meantime, a second man had crept up, knife in hand, and crouched near the prancing horses. He

was awaiting an opportunity of hamstringing de Valletort's charger. But Roger, seeing him, shook himself free from his assailant and, leaning over, drove the point of his sword into the back of the scoundrel's neck. There was a wrench, a jerk, and the body fell forward under the hoof-beats, the head nearly severed from its trunk.

"One!" shouted Roger grimly, wheeling back upon his former combatant with dripping sword. But the two men of the original party had already accounted for another, while a third, catching sight of Vipont riding up, made off into the thick tangle of the woods.

De Valletort and his assailant were now both crippled. Only the life was coming back again now into the younger man's arm. The other shook himself clear of the useless mace and, dropping rein, caught at the dagger and lifted his left arm to strike; but, as Arnoul reached for the short, pointed sword that hung at his saddle-bow, the great horse slipped, and he found his opponent fighting on the ground.

Quick as thought he saw his danger. He could never cope with it as long as he was mounted. So, with a glance to see that all were occupied in a hand-to-hand fight, he slipped from the saddle and rushed at him. The point of his weapon glanced harmlessly off the other's armour as he cut and thrust. Both men slipped and slid in the rain-beaten clay. It was as much as he could do to keep his footing, and parry the lightning-like strokes of the gleaming dagger upon his shield. The man in rusty armour seemed to possess the strength of ten. He was, for all his huge bulk, as agile as a cat, springing hither and thither over the greasy clay and directing a perfect rain of blows upon the squire's shield and mail. Arnoul pressed forward and drew back again

warily, his breath coming sharp and quick as he summed up his chances. There was one at least, he thought, that might bring the struggle to a speedy end if he could but make it serve him. The man wore a helmet with a nose-piece of bars shaped something like an open fan. At all other points he was invulnerable to a dagger thrust. Here, at least, he might be wounded. Drawing back for an instant he let his adversary press on, holding his round shield the while before his face, and evading, rather than parrying, the stabbing weapon. Then, with a hiss of indrawn breath, he lifted his short steel blade to the level of the man's head and, heedless, of blows, rushed at him. The dagger struck the steel bars of the nose-piece, glanced off and found an entry. The man screamed with pain, but Arnoul, getting his shield up close against his breast so that his adversary was powerless to strike other than sideways at him, thrust his dagger again and again between the bars. Twice—thrice—it struck steel; but something warm trickling down its blade and soaking through his gauntlet, warned him that his enemy was wounded. At last the point pierced deep. With a shriek the man fell, tearing the dagger, wedged tight between the bars, from Arnoul's hand. The point had gouged through the eye and entered his brain. He was dead.

De Valletort was unarmed. His sword was broken, his dagger wedged by the hilt between the bars of the dead man's helmet. And the fight was not yet done. In the struggle he had worked his way to the side of the road; but Roger, he could see and hear, was giving battle yet manfully to two assailants: and the strangers were still hard pressed man to man. He stumbled across the roadway. On a sudden he caught sight of the fallen mace. Seizing it, he hurried up to Roger's

assistance and, coming behind one of the two men, brought it down with a crash on the back of his steel cap. He rolled off his horse and fell like a log.

"Two! Well struck, my master!" shouted Roger. "Go you now to the rescue of the others. God's Blood! But I can settle a score here. Get your horse, though, first; or else mount this one."

The man's words came in gasps. He had been fighting hard, and blood was running down his face.

But Arnoul remained on foot. The rain had ceased now, and the lightnings came fewer and fewer. The roadway was a splash with greasy mire. It was safer on foot.

Before him he saw the dismounted man throw up his arms and fall with a groan. His assailant made off to help his fellows. They were five now—two on foot and three mounted against three. De Valletort pressed on towards them, whirling the mace. A high-pitched shriek rang out as one of the riders went down, and a muttered oath was cut short by the heavy thud of his ponderous weapon. Four to three! No, four to four; for there was Vipont himself riding with his sword drawn. Before the knight could come to close quarters Arnoul had disabled another man who was in the act of dragging the unhorsed rider towards the woods at the side of the road. He stooped down and laid his hand over the man's heart, but the armed hauberk effectually prevented his feeling the beats.

"Saints!" he exclaimed, astonished, as he perceived the loose set of the mail upon the figure. "'Tis a child, at most, they have wounded! The brutes! To set upon children in this guise!" And, picking up the inert body in his arms, he bore it away from the plunging horses to a place of safety near the

barrier. Then, without more ado, he turned to rejoin his companions.

But the fight was finished. Of the sixteen who had engaged in it five were lying stretched upon the ground. Roger had his steel cap off and was wiping the blood and sweat from his face. Sir Sigar sat proudly in his saddle as he thrust his sword—there was a stain on it, too—into its sheath. A man sat stupidly in the roadway rubbing his head. All the assailants who were not wounded or dead had run away.

“Here is a fine thing!” said Vipont, with a smile. “We set out to make our way peaceably to England, and we meet with the adventures of the knights-errant! Bravely done! Nobly fought, my son! I watched your blade make pretty work of yonder carcass. Would to God I could have come to your assistance! Nay, glad am I that my horse would not take the barrier, since you have thus knightly acquitted yourself alone! For this deed you shall have your golden spurs. It is worthy of knighthood. Though, indeed, even I worked one small work. That man”—he pointed to the fellow sitting in the middle of the road and grinning stupidly—“will have cause to remember my sword. Come, scoundrel, who are you and who are these gentlefolk that you have attacked?”

The man rubbed his head, getting his scattered wits together. His had been a shrewd blow. He gave no very intelligible answers at first, but Arnoul and Vipont gathered that they had fallen upon the very lord—Fuld his name was—against whom the peasant had warned them, in the act of attacking another band of travellers. Fortunate for them was it that they had come upon him and his murderous retainers already occupied.

Otherwise, thought Arnoul, the issue would have probably been quite other than it was.

The man sat in the road, answering Vipont's questions.

"And this Fuld—where is he?"

"There," the man made answer, pointing at the same time to the body in the rusted armour, the haft of the dagger still protruding from the helmet.

"Hell's curse upon him!" began Vipont shrilly. And then, lowering his voice almost to a whisper—"Nay, nay, Sigar! Those days are over, please God! God rest him! God assoil him! Arnoul, methinks thou hast killed the man!"

"Ay! He is dead right enough," grunted Roger, awkwardly undoing his jerkin so that he might get at his wound.

"Where lies his castle? Is it near by?" pursued the knight judicially.

"A half league through the woods," the man muttered.

"These for his soul—though he deserve it not!" Vipont threw a handful of coins before the dazed man. "See that masses be read for him, fellow. It sickeneth me to see dead men. Come away, Arnoul! Come away! Not but that it was in fair fight and a brave deed, lad," he added.

But de Valletort was attending to Roger's wound. He stayed where he was as the knight turned away, and questioned in his stead.

"Is there shelter to be had nearer than thy master's castle?" he asked.

"Nay. Naught closer than Houlgate."

"Who are these, then, with whom you fought? Are they faring towards the coast?"

"Nay, lord. They ride inlands from Caen."

"We cannot leave them here in this plight, master," said Roger. "Either must we remain here, or they turn back with us."

"We shall see. We shall see. How is that, Roger? Is it more easy now?"

"Thanks to you, Master Arnoul. For a day or two I shall be stiff, doubtless. I am not used to steel thrusts. But 'twill be no more than a scratch."

As they spoke together to the man, de Valletort attending to Roger's wound, a sound—half groan, half sigh—came from the barricade. Then they noticed that one of the rescued had slipped from his horse and gone to the rider whom Arnoul had carried senseless from the fight. They went over to the pair. One was on his knees unlacing the other's headpiece.

"My father! My father! I shall never reach him!" came from beneath the mail a childish voice.

"Yes, mistress, indeed you will. See! We are rescued and the villains put to flight," whispered the kneeling figure.

"Mistress!" echoed Arnoul. "Then it is a woman! Sir Sigar, methought these two were children. The one I carried weighed light as feathers. They are women we have rescued."

And then, as the unlaced hood fell back and the dark hair escaped on each side of the pale face, he started in amazement, seizing Vipont's arm.

"What is it?" asked the knight, laying his hand upon his sword hilt. "Are there more thieves to destroy? I would I were but young again and I should pursue those cut-throat villains to the death!"

"Look! Look!" gasped Arnoul. "'Tis your own daughter Sibilla we have saved from capture. That is Sibilla lying on the roadside—Sibilla, I tell you, Sibilla!"

His voice came high and hysterical. What with the sudden action of the fight and this discovery, he was excited and unnerved. Vipont turned his horse's head, and then slowly climbed from the saddle. He moved over to the prostrate figure, not realising at once what Arnoul had said. But de Valletort was before him and, kneeling, passed his mailed arm under the girl's head.

"Sibilla! Sibilla!" he cried in a rapture, as he gazed down upon her beautiful, pallid face. "It is I, Arnoul, Arnoul de Valletort. Do not fear! We have put your assailants to flight. Look up! Look up, my beloved! 'Tis I, Arnoul, and your own father, Sir Sigar, who have come to you!"

He pushed his helmet back from his head as he spoke and discovered his features.

The girl lifted her eyes to his face with a sigh of content. She put her arm, covered with its unwieldy chain armour, up towards him in a gesture of trust and abandonment, and then quietly fainted. Sir Sigar stood, looking down upon the two of them, Roger staring, open mouthed and eyed, over his shoulder.

"Sibilla!" exclaimed the knight in wonder. "Sibilla! And here? Thank God we were in time! And this . . . ? This is Blanche in man's attire. Loosen the strappings of her armour and give her air! Thank God! Thank God!"

Then, kneeling too and uncovering his head, he addressed the squire and the unconscious girl.

"My son de Valletort, worthy to be a knight, worthy of my daughter Sibilla! What said the friar? 'Let him win the maid.' And, forsooth—it is indeed a providence!—he has won her, won her at the sword's point! A valiant fight! A noble prowess! Daughter, you hearken? This is my son—my son, I tell you, de

Valletort. He makes suit for your hand, Sibilla. He loves you ; and, by God's grace, he has rescued you from these dogs of robbers. I give my consent, my full consent. What say you? What——"

But Arnoul interposed. "Sir, your daughter is in a swoon. She hears you not. Neither can we stay here all the night. The darkness grows apace. We must forge ahead and find some shelter ; or else push on to the harbour. Roger, get the horses and the men together. One poor fellow is dead—or wounded. If he be dead we must perforce leave him where he lies ; but, wounded, you must make shift to take him on your mount. My lord, to horse ! I shall carry the maid. To horse all, and forward !"

He pressed his lips upon the brow of the unconscious girl and, lifting her in his arms, approached the horse that Roger led forward by the bridle rein. Quickly he swung himself into the saddle, and bent his arm around the motionless form.

Then, with Sir Sigar at his side, and the others following, he rode forward, in the fast-gathering gloom, towards Houlgate.

CHAPTER XXXVI

WHEN NIECE MEETS AUNT

IT had happened on this wise. The Franciscan friars had brought it all about when they trudged, begging, to Exeter and made their way to the convent. There were many comings and goings at the Benedictine house of Exeter. The Lady Abbess was something of a celebrity in the land and a power, certainly, to be reckoned with in things ecclesiastical. And so, not only the grave Cistercians who journeyed to and fro between England and France, but Premonstratensians and Cordeliers and Blackfriars as well, sometimes found that their business compelled them to take that same good lady into their counsels.

So it was that one, a Franciscan friar, Elias by name, who had, though he did not mention it, been some four months in voyaging from his convent in France into Devon, bore her tidings of her brother, Sigar Vipont.

He was a doleful man, this Friar Elias, with a woe-begone countenance and a lachrymose voice. His ungloved fingers, as well as his bare feet, were swollen and blue with cold and exposure, for he had come on foot with his companion, as begging Minors should, on a quest for his convent and order.

Of the two, he ought assuredly to have been the companion, for his fellow was plump and well-favoured, with a ruddy face and a twinkling eye, to whose fingers and toes the cold weather brought no chilblains, and

from whose jovial countenance no amount of hardship or care could smooth out the perpetual smile.

Still, Brother Elias was the superior; and it was for him to address the Lady Abbess. He did so without so much as raising his eyes to her face—Brother Leo the while letting his range about the apartment and taking good stock of the sister at the same time. The business that had led this strangely assorted couple to the Exeter nunnery completed, Brother Elias hummed and hawed.

“There is one other thing I ought, perchance, to tell your ladyship. I am lately come from Paris and. . . . That is to say, Brother Leo here and I have crossed the ocean—good saints, how the barque rocked in the crossing! We happed upon a certain knight—in the Convent of St Jacques, it was—sorely afflicted, forsooth—the hand of the Lord lies heavy upon him, for he has slain a priest of God—one Sigar, Lord of Moreleigh. This same lord,” the friar continued, not noticing, since his eyes were fixed upon the oaken planks of the floor, the Abbess’ change of colour, “this same knight—his name is Vipont. . . . Is not your name, Lady Abbess, Vipont? He lay sick of an incurable disease. He——”

“For heaven’s sake, man, speak your mind if you have anything to say!” the impatient lady broke in upon him. “What of my brother? Is he dead, too?”

“Dead? The good saints send not! I did not say that he was dead, did I?” the Minor whined and drawled. “I said, forsooth, that I—that my Brother Leo here and I had seen the knight in Paris, ill and——”

“And what said he?”

“Said? I did not say that we had spoken with him. We saw him only, in the Convent of St Jacques.”

"What news have you of him, then?" snapped the Abbess, losing patience.

"That he is ill."

"Of what? A podagra or a melancholy humour? Is he choleric or has he been stricken with the leprosy? Speak, friar, and tell me what you know!"

"I know naught, Lady Abbess. I did not say that I knew aught. But he assuredly looked ill—as one nigh to death's door. Did he not look ill, my Brother Leo?"

Thus addressed, the rubicund friar let loose the flood-gates of his pent-up eloquence and poured out, without once stopping to take breath, a circumstantial account of the appearance of Sir Sigar. As Brother Elias was painfully accurate and kept to his facts, so Brother Leo, ignoring fact, put his own interpretation upon what he had seen, and gave the good Lady Abbess so detailed and harrowing a picture of her brother's state that even that self-possessed lady lost countenance.

"So he is indeed nigh to death?" she questioned sadly, when a pause came in the torrent of words. "Poor Sigar!"

"Nigh to death!" exclaimed the friar, wreathed in smiles and rubbing one plump hand comfortably over the other. "Nigh to death, of a surety, if he be not already dead. At the least, from his appearance, he must be stricken with the fevers of Italy, with phthisic and with rheumatic caught in the mountains, with. . . ." The sentence finished in a catalogue of maladies.

"Good Saint Scholastica!" The Lady Abbess was much moved. "What a calamity! But breathe no word of this further. His daughter is in the convent, in my wardship. She must hear no word of it. Sibilla must know nothing of her father's illness. I shall have her sick on my hands next, if she learns it. She will

fret and worry and pine. Good Saint Scholastica! What a calamity!"

The intentions of the Abbess were of the best, and she only told the Prioress what she had heard. She did this merely to ease her own feelings. The Prioress gave it, in strict confidence, to the cellarer. The cellarer kept her counsel and said nothing. But in convents, sometimes, notwithstanding the manifold rules and regulations, of which the practice of silence is one and not the least, news seems in an inexplicable manner and with incredible swiftness to get abroad. Before Vespers even the lay sisters had heard that Sir Sigar was *in extremis*, as a result of falling over a precipice in the Alps. When Compline was over Sibilla had learnt that her father was lying seriously ill in Paris. She went straight to her aunt the Abbess.

"Well, child," said the good lady, catching sight of the girl's pallid face, "what is the matter that you seek me after Compline? This is not the time for breaking the silence of a religious house with idle chatter."

"Dear aunt," Sibilla said piteously, "they tell me that father is dying."

"Tut, tut, child! Nothing of the kind! Who has been telling you such nonsense?"

"Who has told me? I don't know. I don't remember. Everyone seems to know all about it. But it is not nonsense, Aunt Matilda. I see in your face that it is true. Dear aunt," she pleaded, "tell me the truth. What ails my father? Is he . . . ? Is he . . . ?"

The brown eyes brimmed over with tears.

"No, he is not!" The Lady Abbess was emphatic. She drew Sibilla towards her and put her arm about the girl's slight form. "He suffers from an ague, child, or

a chill, or a twinge of the gout, perhaps. Take my word for it, it can't be anything serious, or I should have been advised of it."

"Still, he is ill and alone, in Paris?"

"Unwell, possibly, but hardly alone. He will be in some guest-house or lodging where he will be well attended to. The leeches of France are as good and better than those of England. Do not fear for him, Sibilla. Come, weep not, child! Tut! Tut! A Vipont and tears! Blessed Saint Scholastica, what a sight!"

The good lady's own eyes looked suspiciously bright as she spoke, comforting and mothering the weeping girl.

At last Sibilla dried her eyes. "I am going to him," she said simply.

"Are you out of your mind, girl, to think of such a thing?" her aunt asked, almost roughly.

"No, aunt, I am not mad; but I go to Paris to my father."

"You shall do nothing of the kind. You are in my care, and I forbid anything so foolish and so absurd. The idea! A slip of a girl like you to talk of crossing into France and making your way to Paris alone!"

"Yet I shall certainly go."

"I forbid you to dream of such madness! It is preposterous — impossible! Come, Sibilla; I am truly sorry for you, but you must see that you can do nothing. Say your prayers and be off to bed! Poor Sigar will come back safe and sound, never you fear. That's a good child, now!"

The Abbess kissed the girl upon her brow, and dismissed her with cheering words. Then she sat back in her chair and wrinkled her old forehead and thought how much easier it was to manage a whole abbeyful of sisters than one Vipont, and that a girl.

Sibilla, meanwhile, went to her room. But she did not obey her aunt's advice. She, too, sat far into the night thinking. At last she rose and went into the adjoining room.

"Blanche!" she whispered, shaking her sleeping maid. "Wake up, Blanche, and listen to me!"

"What is the matter, mistress?" asked the woman sleepily, rubbing her eyes. Without, the dawn was just beginning to stir in the sky.

"Hush! Do not speak so loud, Blanche! Someone might hear! Are you ready to do me a great service? Listen! My father is ill in France, and I am going to him. You will help me, Blanche, won't you?"

"Help you, mistress! of course that will I. But why all this suddenness and secrecy?"

"Hush, Blanche; do not speak so loud! My aunt prevents my going, so I must steal away. I want you to slip out and make your way over to Moreleigh. See Pigot and tell him my plan. You will get money from him and two of the castle men. Also, we shall need four horses; for you will come with me. Then go yourself and find one of the pages' suits—one that will fit me—and a jack or a light suit of mail from the guardroom. If Pigot makes any objections tell him that it is my will. You must get arms, too, and men's clothing for yourself. And to-morrow, by nightfall, be you with the two men at the mouth of the river. We are sure to find a ship sailing for France. They come and go every day. Pigot had better come with you—or go to-night—to see about the ship——"

"But, mistress," broke in the bewildered maid, "how can all this be done in the time? And what will Pigot have to say to it all?"

"Hush, Blanche! Hush! It must be done as I

say. And Pigot must do as I tell him. Say nothing about this to anyone—not to a living soul—in the convent ; but as soon as ever you can, get away and make for Moreleigh. Do everything as I have told you. Pigot must hand over to you enough money for any emergency. Show him this ring if he questions or refuses ; and tell him that it is my bidding. And, Blanche——”

“ Yes, mistress ? ”

“ You are a faithful creature. You love me, Blanche ? ”

“ And have I not loved you ever since I held you in my arms as a baby ? ”

“ And you would do much for me ? ”

“ All I might do, dear mistress. There is nothing I would not do for you.”

“ Then see you fail me not to-morrow at dark. Make all the preparations for the journey. See that Pigot gives you two strong men and used to arms—both of them mounted on good horses and with provision. They will both ride armed. Find yourself a light hauberk, too ; and we had both better have large hoods to them to hide our hair. But fail me not, Blanche ! As you love me—and I know you do love me—do not fail me.”

“ I shall not fail you, Mistress Sibilla. Upon my life, all shall be done as you have said. And if that cross-grained Pigot refuses—— Ah ! So much the worse for Pigot ! ” she concluded.

The impulsive girl threw her arms about the serving-woman and hugged her. She knew that her plan would not miscarry. With what results it was carried out the reader is already acquainted.

CHAPTER XXXVII

SIR ARNOUL DE VALLETORT

MORELEIGH church was nearly built. The old knight saw the walls rising with a great satisfaction and content, knowing that his penance was all but accomplished. With his own hands he laboured at the growing pile of masonry, carrying the rough blocks of stone and setting them in their places, bearing the mortar to the masons on the scaffolding, trying, even, with his unskilled hands to chisel the squared stones that were to serve as corner pieces for the angles of the building.

From the late springtime, when he had come back to Devon, and on through the summer months until the russet of early autumn took the place of the soft greens, and the flowers began to fall from the yellow gorse, he had hardly missed a day at Moreleigh church. He had grown to love it as a part of himself. It was no longer as a penance that he built. Rather was it in fulfilment of a vow, but a vow, none the less, that spelt his release. And so, as the days shortened and the walls ever grew higher from the greensward, his tall, bent form could be seen going in and out among the workmen, to whom his kindly words and sad, sweet smile had endeared him no less than his pathetic story. He was no more the fiery Sir Sigar of Moreleigh Castle, with a harsh word or a blow for all who crossed him, but a patient, broken old man, with bowed head and gentle speech and kindly smile, ready to undertake

the roughest and the meanest work beside his own servants.

And so Moreleigh church was built—a body waiting for its soul; for as yet it had not been consecrated, nor had Mass been offered within its walls. It was a little church. A man could measure it from end to end in twenty paces. But surely never church was built with so great love and care. The short, square tower rising sheer and solid amid the surrounding trees towards the blue sky, the tiny sanctuary carrying on the lines of the narrow nave, the south aisle—all were planned and executed with a minute detail of proportion and decoration that made the church, small as it was, a perfect example of art and skill. The south wall was pierced by an archway giving access to a chantry chapel. “That,” said Vipont to himself, “I shall provide for my own soul. When I am gone and forgotten, a priest shall read the Holy Mass there for me too.” And he smiled his sad smile as he thought of his prudence. Truly a wondrous change was wrought in the heart of the Lord of Moreleigh.

The lovers, too, Arnoul and Sibilla, were frequent pilgrims to the spot. He had come back with his golden spurs, for Vipont had insisted upon going straightway to the royal court of St Albans upon their landing in England and craving the boon of knighthood for his squire. He himself had stood sponsor for the lad with no less a person than Baldwin de Redvers, the Earl of Devon. Together they had kept vigil in the great Abbey church through the long silence of the night, broken only by the chanting of Matins in the far-off choir. Sir Sigar had insisted on keeping the fast with Arnoul, and, shriven and houselled also, had led him to the King. The Abbot of St

Albans had blessed the sword that hung about the lad's neck. And King Henry, always ready to honour bravery, had repeated the formula of knighthood and the admonition with a merry smile lurking in his eyes.

"To what end do you desire to enter into this order? If it is that you may be rich, repose yourself, and be honoured without doing honour to knighthood, then you are unworthy of it, and would be to the knighthood you should receive what the simoniacal priest is to the sacerdotal office. But we know," he added, glancing towards Sibilla, "what your purpose is, and we have heard of your valour and chivalry. Clothe him, sirs and ladies, for the accolade!"

The knights and the ladies brought his knightly dress and put it on him in place of the white tunic, the red robe and the black doublet that he wore. The golden spurs were tied on at his heels with scarlet leather thongs. The chausses were strapped in place at waist and knee. The shining hauberk was slipped over his head and girt about his middle, and the bracelets were fastened at his wrists to hold the gauntlets in place. Then, last of all, the sword was girded on, and he knelt before the King.

"In the Name of God," spoke the monarch, rising to his feet and touching him lightly with his drawn sword. "In the name of God, St Michael and St George, I make thee knight. Be thou brave and loyal." Then the King struck him gently with the hand upon the cheek, and raised him from his knees. Thus was Arnoul the Englishman, sometime clerk of Paris, dubbed a knight by Henry III. of England at the Benedictine house of St Albans.

But there was more than this. The King had other ways of honouring bravery than conferring knighthood ;

and Vipont and Redvers had doubtless arranged it beforehand. Before he left St Albans de Valletort had the title deeds of the King's grant of the manor of Harberton in his possession. He was a lord as well as a knight.

So Sir Arnoul and the Lady Sibilla were frequent visitors at Moreleigh church. They were hardly less interested in the building than Vipont himself; and many were the grey stones that Arnoul set in place in the walls and tower, Sibilla watching him with her great, dark eyes.

But what he loved the best was to sit beneath the trees on the sloping ground behind the church and watch, through the leafy screen, the steadily rising courses and the busy workmen at their toil, with the bowed figure of Sir Sigar moving to and fro among them. There they would sit like happy children, playing with the woodland flowers, whispering words of love into each other's ears and looking into each other's eyes. Or they would wander through the woods, by the banks of the stream, listening to the singing of the birds, drinking in the soft scents of summer, telling each other the wonder of their love.

So went their wooing; for Vipont had given his consent, and Arnoul was a knight. And the violets and yellow primroses faded and gave place to wild hyacinth and daisies in the woods and hedgerows, while they spoke ever the selfsame words. Sir Arnoul would ride from Buckfast, straight and strong on his great bay horse, and doff his plumed cap as he threw a kiss to her before dismounting. Or he would come up on foot from Avon Mouth, striding along, clean limbed and vigorous, in a simple dress of homespun from Cistercian looms. But his greeting was ever the same: "Hey, sweetheart!

And how fares the building?" as he took her in his arms. And she would make answer, her heart beating against his bosom, her blushing face turned up towards his: "It grows apace, my beloved. It will soon be done."

For the consecration of Moreleigh church was the term towards which all things seemed to move. Vipont yearned for the fulfilment of his penance and his freedom. Arnoul and Sibilla were to be united, once the church was built and blessed.

And so at last, when the cornflowers were paling before the upstart Michaelmas daisies, one early morning Arnoul rode to Moreleigh. He wore a light chain mail of Saracen make under his surcoat of rich sendal. The long golden spurs of his knighthood shone at his heels. His cheeks were flushed under their healthy tan, and his eyes sparkled as he thought of the purpose of his riding. A squire followed him bearing his shield—vert, with three mullets, gules, upon a bend, argent.

By all the roads, from all the villages, the peasants flocked to Moreleigh. The Bishop of Exeter, accompanied by his escort of dignitaries, was already there, in the castle, with the Abbot of Buckfast and his monks. His lordship of Exeter was fasting since the day before, for he was going to perform the ceremony of the consecration of a church.

Vipont was talking earnestly with the Abbot, as Arnoul rode into the courtyard and dismounted. He flung his bridle-rein to a page standing by and, with greetings right and left to all, hurried across to the hall. He had caught a glimpse of Sibilla standing at the head of the steps—waiting for him where she had so often waited for her father in the old days.

"Beloved!" he cried. "The day has dawned at

last! The church is finished. The penance is done. And you are mine, Sibilla, mine until death and beyond it! In a few short hours the Bishop will have consecrated Moreleigh church to God, and you will be my wife, sweetheart."

"My beloved!" the girl murmured, yielding to his embrace.

"Think how the knots have been cut away, sweetheart. Think how the tangled skein has been straightened," he said, smoothing her hair back from her brow, and kissing her upon the lips. "The poor clerk of Paris mating with a Vipont! It is passing strange!"

"Hush, Arnoul! Where is there in all the world a knight such as thou? Oh, beloved, my beloved! 'Tis I who should thank God and wonder! When I think of poor Sir Guy . . ."

The knight raised her downcast face and kissed her again, upon the brow. "My brother is with God," he said simply. "Brother Thomas of Aquin comforted me with that word. He watches us in spirit, dear heart, from beside the Throne."

"And Brother Thomas . . ." faltered Sibilla.

"Yes, dear heart, Brother Thomas told me I should win you. But for him—but for your sweet image in my heart—I should . . . See, Sibilla, all these years have I worn thy relic in my bosom. Do you remember the day you placed it there, sweetheart?" He drew out the golden case with its faded ribbon from beneath his mail, and raised it to his lips reverently.

"My beloved!" the girl murmured again, nestling yet closer to his side.

"Come, sweetheart, they are moving in the courtyard. The Bishop is making for the church. We must

go now with the rest. Bravely, my own beloved, bravely ! In one short hour we shall come back hither man and wife."

As Sir Arnoul and Sibilla appeared together at the head of the low steps leading to the courtyard, a cheer went up from the crowd of retainers and guests. They had been bidden for the consecration, but they divined that it was not for that alone, and that the day's ceremony was to end with the wedding of de Valletort and the heiress of Sir Sigar. Every head was turned towards where they stood side by side, at the entrance to the hall. Old Bishop Blondy, still rubicund and portly, though his age was beginning to tell hardly upon him, smiled his approval of the pair and waved his bejewelled hand in cordial blessings from the castle gate. The Abbot raised his eyes and smiled too, while Vipont straightened himself and, walking over towards them, joined their two hands and held them for an instant in his own. It was a graceful act, and shouts of approval burst from the assembly.

There they stood, the three of them, framed in the grey stone doorway of the great hall—the old lord, smiling his pathetic, yet supremely happy smile, as he looked proudly from the one to the other ; the young knight, the sunlight playing on the rich colours of his silken surcoat and glinting from the close-woven links of his mail. Bareheaded he stood, the short locks of his recent knighthood crising on his brow, his mien noble, his visage determined, yet lit with a great light of love. He had no eyes save for Sibilla, as he clasped her little hand in his great brown one, looking down upon her as though to proclaim his worship to the whole wide world. And she, clad in some clinging, flowing stuff of simple white, shaped to the contour of her form by

every breath of the breeze, the hood thrown back, and her wondrous hair held by a plain golden fillet such as—he remembered it—she had first worn at Buckfast for Abbot Benet's feast, the colour coming and going in her face and bosom, tears of sheer happiness and love trembling upon the long lashes that veiled her downcast eyes, she drew closer to him, and her little hand trembled in his as she heard the shouts of joy and welcome uprising from the packed courtyard of the castle.

"Long live Sir Arnoul de Valletort and the Lady Sibilla!" A stentorian voice made itself heard above the rest, and Arnoul, turning for an instant, caught sight of Roger hurling his headgear high above the throng. As the crowd took up the acclamation, good Bishop Blondy waved his plump hands above his head and turned to pass through the gate towards the church.

But at the moment there was a stir under the archway and confusion. The Bishop was shot violently to one side, as a white mule trotted through, followed in a moment by four others ambling more decorously. On the foremost beast sat—or rather, hung—the Abbess Matilda, puffing and panting, her veil awry, her rosy cheeks redder than ever, her eyes rolling wildly and closing alternately. When she managed to get breath and saw the devastation her beast had wrought, she cried aloud, speaking with great rapidity and gesticulating violently. "Don't stand staring there, you dolts! Blessed saints, have you never seen a nun before, or a mule, that you look as though I were a ghost? Hold this beast, someone, and get me down. O St Scholastica! The brute is possessed by seven devils!"

"My Lady Abbess!" the Bishop exclaimed, regaining his countenance with his equilibrium, as the nun slid to the ground. "My Lady Abbess! This is hardly——"

"Oh, my Lord Bishop! My lord! Think you that I . . . ? But you! I am covered with confusion! You are not injured, my Lord Bishop? Blessed saints! What a calamity! Where is Sir Sigar? Where is Sibilla? My lord, it was on this wise. Purposing to come to the consecration, I bade let saddle the mule—the sedatest of mules, my lord, a very paragon of mules! But to-day it is of a surety possessed by the evil one. Scarce could I urge it from our cell hither. It crawled at a snail's pace. When I beat it with my wand, it turned its head to look at me, wagging its ears. Methought the sacring would have been done ere I reached Moreleigh."

"Natheless, you are here, my Lady Abbess," the Bishop remarked, smiling.

"Here!" she panted. "I had near been in purgatory by now! At the top of the hill I heard shouting. Straightway the devil entered into the mule. I could not hold him. My arms cracked with the strain. And ere I could breathe a prayer to my patron, St Scholastica, I had jeopardised the life of your lordship as well as my own. I crave your forgiveness, my good lord; but it was the mule's fault."

"There is naught to forgive, my Lady Abbess. But see to it that you ride not a mule possessed, or we shall soon be having an election at the Abbey of Exeter. But come! We must to the consecration! I had like to faint with hunger." The Bishop gave his blessing to the Abbess and her nuns and passed on, followed by the crowd, to the church; and the good lady, catching sight of the group standing upon the steps of the hall, crossed the courtyard and joined them. Last of all, they passed out of the now deserted castle.

And so the church was consecrated. A tent had

been pitched for the holy relics near by the western door; and in this tent vigil had been kept all the previous night, for the consecration of a church is the burial of a martyr, and on the bier within, surrounded by burning tapers, lay the tiny splinters of bone taken from a martyr's tomb.

The Bishop entered the building. Fixed at intervals upon the walls were twelve crosses before which were stuck twelve unlighted tapers. He gave orders that these should be lighted and then, accompanied by his clergy, retired to the tent where the first part of the service was to take place. After the penitential psalms had been recited, the Bishop meanwhile vesting in his pontificals, the procession returned to the church. All round it they circled thrice, sprinkling the walls with holy water, before they entered. Then, as the deacon who had been left alone in the empty church opened the door to them, the *Pax æterna* was sung, and Bishop and clergy went in. The crowd gathered in a group about the door, waiting until the alphabets, Greek and Latin, had been traced upon the ashes with which the floor was strewn, in the form of a cross, from corner to corner. The salt and the water, the ashes and the wine, were exorcised and blessed. The altar, the walls, the pavement, were aspersed; and all was made ready for the entombment of the relics. Even the mortar that was to seal up the cavity in the altar that represents the tomb was mixed by the Bishop. And then, once more, the church was left empty, as they went to bear the relics to their final resting-place. The procession came back, with lighted tapers and incense, and wound round the church. The voices of the priests repeated again and again the words *Kyrie eleison! Kyrie eleison!* as the relics, almost hidden in a cloud of incense, were

borne, shoulder high, immediately before the Bishop. When they had once more reached the main door, his lordship took his seat upon a faldstool and addressed the Lord of Moreleigh, founder of the church, according to the appointed custom.

"You are aware, dearly beloved brother, that the Sacred Canons do not allow the consecration of churches that are destitute of endowment and ministers. . . . We would therefore know, dearest brother, the number of Priests and Clerks, and the appointments you purpose allowing them, and what endowment you intend to settle on the church."

Sir Sigar hung back. Surely, in this case, when the work was a penance imposed by the Lord Pope, the usual formula of address was unnecessary. But the Bishop continued, recounting the privileges and claims of founders in a monotonous tone. The day was wearing. It was already becoming hot. The Bishop wore full pontificals and a heavy mitre. Besides, he was fasting; so there was some excuse for his reading without overmuch eloquence this purely legal part of the ceremony. A notary stood ready, waiting with the deed of gift. Vipont hung back, but Arnoul, who stood near him whispered in his ear. "It is only a formality, my lord. You must acquaint the Bishop with the nature of the provision you have made."

The old knight cleared his throat nervously. "My lord bishop," he said, "I have done that which our lord the Pope has commanded me. I do hereby give the church that I have built to Holy Church, craving the prayers of the faithful that it may indeed be an acceptable penance in the sight of God for my great wrong-doing. I have provided for the maintenance of three priests: one to read mass, day by day, for the

eternal repose of the soul of Sir Guy de Valletort; another to minister to the good people living hereabout; the third . . . the third, my lord, I purposed. . . I desire that he should read the Holy Mass for me. Your lordship has said that the founders of churches have the first place of honour in the processions on the anniversary of the dedication. My lord, it is an honour that I shall never claim. This church is a penance for a sin. I give it, my lord, and I give it freely. But I cannot forget the occasion of its building, and I could not . . . ! You have said, also, my lord, that if a founder of a church should come to want, the church gives proof of her grateful remembrance of the founder's liberality. So be it. But, my lord, it is a penance and not a liberality. Besides, there is little I shall want. I am an old man, my lord. The days of my pilgrimage are nearly done. I crave of the Church . . . of all good, faithful people, the boon of their prayers." The knight's voice faltered. He drew humbly to one side, scarce hearing the Bishop's gruff—"Sir Sigar! Sir Sigar! You have done well. I' faith, more than our Lord the Pope has commanded you. And as to prayers, methinks we could now ask you to pray for us!"

The words are set down in no known variation of the Rite for the Consecration of a Church, but the good Bishop, moved beyond his wont, used them none the less.

The service of the hallowing continued. The sacred relics were borne to their temporary resting-place within the building, while the altar tomb was prepared for them by the unction with the chrism. Then they were reverently laid within it, and solemnly incensed by the Bishop. The tomb was closed and sealed. The unctions of the altar, with the oil of the catechumens and

the oil of chrism, of the walls, where the twelve crosses marked the places of anointing, with the chrism alone, were completed ; and the five little fires of wax and incense were lighted at the four corners and in the middle of the altar. Lastly came the cleansing of the holy table and its adorning with fair linen for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. The church was consecrated. Vipont's penance was accomplished.

And then the Mass began, old Bishop Blondy himself singing it, with the monks from Buckfast for a choir. And when the Mass was over Sir Arnoul and the Lady Sibilla were married.

After the ring had been blessed and slipped over the outstretched finger of the bride's right hand—this at the church door—they entered and knelt before the newly hallowed altar while the good old Bishop pronounced them man and wife. The monks craned their necks to see Sir Arnoul the better, and Abbot Benet, leaning back in his stall, shut his eyes and let his mind run back to the day when the handsome, stalwart knight had first come, a little lad, holding his brother's hand, to the Abbey of Buckfast.

So it was done. A great shout rent the air when Sir Arnoul and his bride came forth once more into the sunlight. Roger was beside himself with joy, as he helped the peasants to strew the path to the castle with autumn leaves and flowers. So bereft was he of his senses that when he found himself beside Blanche he even whispered to her that another wedding might be arranged in which he and she should play the leading part. He got a box on the ear for his pains, but her blush and giggle paid him well for his venture.

At the castle there were feastings to follow. Sir Sigar sat in the great hall at the head of the board with

Sibilla and Arnoul beside him. He was at peace with all the world, and smiled gently to himself as the guests made away with the good cheer he had provided.

And in the courtyard below, the retainers and peasants feasted and made merry in honour of the bride and groom, until once more Sir Arnoul stood before them upon the steps with Sibilla hanging upon his arm, Vipont and his guests pressing forward behind them. The slant sun wrapped them both in its glory, flashing back from the golden reliquary upon his breast and the fillet in her hair. Together they stood before the retainers of the house and the peasants from its broad lands, acknowledging their joyous greetings, smiling back upon the throng of happy, smiling faces.

Then Sir Arnoul took both the Lady Sibilla's hands in his and, drawing her towards him, kissed her sweet face before them all.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ENVOI

THE bells of the Abbey of St Mary at Buckfast were ringing for solemn Mass. On the high altar of Our Lady the tall tapers were lighted. The monks, choir brethren and lay, were slowly filling up the choir, four ranks of them, two on each side, of white-cowled figures and brown-cloaked forms, kneeling motionless in the stalls. The Abbot was in his place facing the altar, and away from him on either hand, and then at right angles in lines towards the altar, knelt the brethren. At the far end the ragged thatch of Brother Peter struggled out from under the hood of his habit. His little, wizened face was bent down. His eyes were closed, and his weather-beaten, knotted hands folded in prayer. He had come from the moors to the Abbey to prepare himself for the last great day of shepherding. On the other side of the choir, opposite him, knelt a solitary form, clothed in a plain tunic of white wool, girt with a leathern girdle. It was time for the Mass to begin.

In the body of the church few people were gathered :—a knight and his lady, a little knot of the dependants of the Abbey, a handful of neighbouring peasants. They were all watching, close as might be to the choir, for the sacred ministrants to approach the altar.

But before they came from the sacristy, and the

brethren set to singing the Introit of the Mass, the Abbot rose in his stall and moved to the middle of the choir. The white-robed figure rose, too, and approached him. What words were spoken the watchers could not hear, but they saw the postulant fall upon his knees and they caught the rapt look of utter peace that shone in his face, as, with hands meekly folded, and eyes uplifted, he received the black scapulary at the hands of the Lord Abbot. It was the sign of his reception into the Cistercian Family.

With tears streaming from his eyes he took his place, among the youngest of the novices, and the Abbot went back to his stall.

Sir Sigar Vipont, Lord of Moreleigh, was a Cistercian novice of the house of St Mary of Buckfast.

The Mass began. The monks chanted the strange old melodies of Gloria and Credo. The incense clouds rose aloft before the altar, and drifted back into the nave. Sibilla's eyes were brimming as she knelt beside Arnoul; and he, as he let his glance stray from the altar and the new novice to the dear one at his side, felt a tear start unbidden to his own.

"My own beloved," he whispered to her, as, Mass finished, the Abbot came out into the nave, leading the novice towards them to take his farewell. "Sweetheart, Brother Thomas bade me know how wonderful are the ways of God. Meseems 'tis He who has had us all within His keeping. And He has given thee to me, even as Brother Thomas said."

"Ay, dearest!"—and Sibilla lifted her dewy eyes to his—"God has given thee to me, and me to thee."

"And to St Mary of Buckfast has He given a most worthy son," added the Abbot, overhearing her words.

"All are blessed by Him ; and may His blessings rest upon us all !"

"All but Sir Guy !" the novice murmured sadly.

"To His priest Sir Guy has He given the Paradise of His eternal love," said the Abbot.

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